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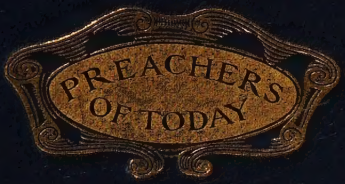

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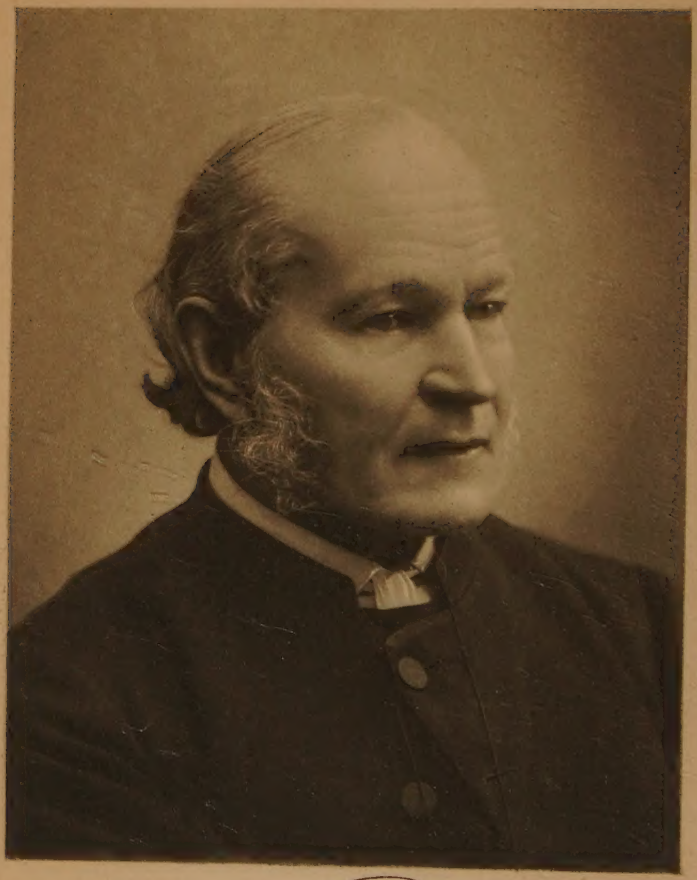

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TRUE RELIGION

SERMONS

BY

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DEAN OF CANTERBURY
AND DEPUTY CLERK OF THE CLOSET TO THE QUEEN

LONDON
S. T. FREEMANTLE
217 PICCADILLY
1899

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PREFACE

These sermons, which I print by request, neither are, nor were intended to be, directly controversial. Most of them were written without any reference to the prolonged and often bitter controversies by which the Church has for some time been distracted and embarrassed. It may sometimes be necessary to preach polemical sermons when there is danger of the revival of erroneous doctrines or superstitious practices, which seem to us to be introduced in defiance of the teaching on which, at the time of the Reformation, the standard formularies of our Church were based. We cannot but condemn the obtrusion upon our congregations of tenets and of ceremonies which do not find the least real support in Scripture or from our Prayer-book and Articles, and which are not unfrequently at variance with what has been authoritatively announced, and deliberately accepted for more than three centuries, as the distinctive teaching of the Church of England. But even when there is a widespread endeavour among many of the clergy to assimilate the Church of England as closely as

possible to the Church of Rome, and to revive those "*errores, corruptelæ, et superstitiones olim hic grassantes,*" which, to use the language of the prayer always offered to God when our Convocation is opened —"*ad amussim sanctæ Reformationis nostræ merito et serio repudiavimus*"—even then I doubt whether it is ordinarily desirable to use our pulpits for purposes of controversy. There are sacred thoughts which lie transcendently above the low level of disputes about "views" of doctrine, and minutiæ of ritual. The object of sermons is to impress upon all who hear them the truths which are of eternal importance for the regulation of their lives in the sight of God. Sermons would soon become worse than valueless if they were occupied with incessant diatribes about questions of partisan religionism. We have but to turn to English literature, and to the poets who are its noblest representatives, to see what classes of the clergy, and what style of sermons, have produced the most permanent effect and won the deepest confidence. We read in Chaucer—

> "A good man ther was of religioun
> That was a poure Persone of a toun;
> But riche he was of holy thought and werk,
> He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
> That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche
> His parishen devoutly wolde he teache:
>
> . . . . .
>
> And though he holy were, and vertuous,
> He was to sinful men not disputous,

Ne of his speche dangerous, ne digne,
But in his teching discrete and benigne.
To drawen folk to heven with fairenesse,
By good ensample was his besinesse :

. . . . . .

He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve."

We read in Goldsmith of the village preacher—

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour :

. . . . . .

But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all ;

. . . . . .

He try'd each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way."

And, not to multiply examples, in Cowper we read—

"There stands the messenger of truth ; there stands
The legate of the skies ! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders, and, by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart ;
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war
The sacramental host of God's elect."

Objects such as are set forth by these great poets are those which the preacher should, as an all but universal rule, set before him. I do not say that perils of strange doctrine, and of the setting forth of truth in an entirely false perspective, may not, at times, become so urgent that a minister may not be compelled—by his duty to his Church and to those who are liable to be misled by aberrations from its distinctive standpoint—to deal with questions which may be of themselves of little direct importance, but may involve more serious errors. But such occasions are rare. In the sermons which follow it has been my aim, with scarcely any allusion to present discussions, to deal, all but exclusively, with truths and obligations which bear immediately upon the salvation of our souls.

I have heard many controversial discourses which have only angered many of their hearers, and have left them neither better, holier, nor wiser; which have, moreover, been essentially feeble and one-sided, and would have admitted of the most easy and decisive refutation. Many of them have been but "the ever widening spiral *ergo* from the narrow aperture of single texts"; others have built inverted pyramids of enormous superstructure on some purely isolated and metaphorical expression. It would be well if such controversialists would bear in mind the warning of St. Augustine, "*Scriptura est sensus Scripturæ.*" To tear an accidental and figurative phrase away from its context;—to give

it a sense which has little or no connection with all the rest of the Old or New Testament;—to overlook the fact that the significance attached to it is refuted by other phrases which involve the exact antithesis of the opinions drawn from it;—is one of the most dangerous and worthless of all forms of controversy. To argue that the Christian ministry is a sacrificial priesthood on the strength of the two incidental words in St. Paul, in spite of the fact that such an interpretation makes nonsense of both passages, and that the word ἱερεῖς (*sacerdotes*) is not once given to Christian presbyters in the whole New Testament;—to argue that the Lord's Table is an "altar" on the strength of a phrase in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which has not so been understood by any leading Christian divine from St. Ambrose to Bishop Westcott, which is repudiated even by such great Roman Catholic commentators as St. Thomas Aquinas, Rupert of Deutz, and Estius, and which makes the whole passage absolutely meaningless;—to argue in favour of the use of incense in worship from a chance allusion in Malachi, though there is not the faintest reference to the use of incense for the purposes of earthly worship in the teaching of our Lord or any one of His Apostles;—to wrest the Scriptures in this way is not to use any valid argument, but to snatch at any implement, however antiquated, or however blunt, which may be so flourished about as to dazzle the wholly ignorant or the half-informed.

If we desire that our Christian worship in the Church of England should be real, and noble, and primitive, and in the true sense scriptural, we must learn what are its essential elements from the teaching of Christ Himself, and of those Apostles who knew Him most intimately, and were most plenarily inspired by His Holy Spirit. Nothing can be even important, much less essential, for the life in Christ, to which Christ Himself and His Disciples never attached the most infinitesimal importance. Such ritual adjuncts of worship as were only introduced into the Church, with masses of false and alien superstitions, in the darkest ages of Christendom, are for the most part deplorable aberrations from "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." The worship in which our Blessed Lord habitually took part, Sabbath after Sabbath, throughout long years of His life, was all but exclusively the worship of the Synagogue. The Jewish synagogues were bare even to baldness; they were almost wholly devoid of any sort of decoration, and the forms of worship adopted in them were as entirely free from any kind of ceremonial as those adopted in any Dissenting chapel. If such forms of worship were approved by the Lord of our Salvation; if He never disparaged, but, on the contrary, habitually frequented, the humble buildings in which they were carried on; if He never uttered a single word designed to encourage a more pompous or symbolic ritual; if those synagogues sufficed Him for the

proclamation of the word of life; and if—as is undoubtedly the case—the Synagogue, not the Temple, furnished the early Christians with the model of their congregational worship, and the idea of their ministry—then it is idle to pretend that incense, and vestments, and genuflexions, and ablutions, and crossings, and lights, and elaborate ceremonies, and ornaments, and the veneration of images and crucifixes, are desirable—much less necessary—elements of acceptable devotion. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." The only rubric in the entire New Testament is, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.'

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I

OUR INDIVIDUAL DUTY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

TRUE RELIGION

I

OUR INDIVIDUAL DUTY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the Living God."—1 Tim. iii. 15.

The English word "Church" may perhaps be derived from the Greek word *Κυριακὸν*, "belonging to the Lord." The word *Ecclesia*, used throughout the East and West, means the assembly of those who have been "called forth." The word *Κυριακὸν*—reminding us Whose we are, and Whom we serve—implies that the Church is the House, the Temple, the Body, the Vineyard, the Sheepfold of Christ, its Lord. The word *Ecclesia* tells us that all its members have been "summoned forth" from the world to live unto God. By "a church" in the lowest sense, we designate the consecrated building, the holy house in which we worship our Almighty Father. Then it is applied to special communities of

Christians, as "the Church of England" or "the Church of Rome." Then it means "the blessed company of all faithful people;" "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth." Finally, in its highest sense—as when we say in the Creeds, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"—we mean all the beloved children of God—both the living, and those who have gone before; the angel-host, and the spirits of just men made perfect:—

> "One company we dwell in Him,
> One Church above, beneath;
> Though now divided by the stream,
> The narrow stream of death."

2. Let us not, my friends, I entreat you, learn to look on this belief as a conventionality of small practical meaning. It is no mere fantastic dogma; no thin theological abstraction. On the contrary, there are three ways in which it may be of infinite value to our souls.

(i.) It is rich in *consolation.* It reminds us that we are not fighting the battles of God, in the world, and in our own hearts, alone. We are soldiers in one great army, which has been marching through the gate of death to final victory since time began. Our prayers—faint and feeble though they be—mingle with the supplications of all God's saints, like fragrant incense in the golden censer of the Great High-Priest. Is it no encouragement to know that our weak voices are reverberated by the millionfold utterances of all faithful hearts? If we be Christ's,

His sympathy, and the sympathy of all our brethren who are in the world, will flash lightning into our feeble efforts; will thrill our hearts as with an electric flame.

(ii.) And our membership of a Church is also *a powerful incentive* to us to behave ourselves worthily in this Temple of the Living God. The voice of Christ will ever be sounding in our ears: Bear thyself nobly—not as an apostate, not as a renegade, not as a selfish and useless sluggard, not as a mean Mr. Facing-both-ways, in this My Church. The thought that "England expects every man to do his duty," inspires our humblest soldiers and sailors to heroic faithfulness; how is it that the far more glorious fact that we are all brethren in Christ's Church so seldom stirs our hearts to any effort or magnanimity? Yet, since, at our baptism, we were pledged to fight manfully under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, indifference, or treachery, on our part, is nothing less than this—it is to break our oath; it is to abandon our colours; it is to desert our service; it is to betray our cause.

(iii.) Our incorporation into the Church of Christ is, then, a consolation, and an incentive; it is also *a most searching appeal to our consciences.* We profess and call ourselves Christians; and, therefore, we are members of a body, to which we owe the most solemn duties. Are we fulfilling those duties? What services are we rendering? Might it not be more

pertinent to ask: Are we—it is a solemn question—rendering any real service at all to the Lord of our life, and to our brethren—His common children with ourselves—whom, as one main end of our existence, He bade us love and serve?

3. So then, in urging upon you what is required of each of us as members of Christ's Church, I am both reminding you of urgent duties, and am trying to correct a lazy acquiescence, which is all but universal in prevalence, and fatally paralysing in results. Thousands of the laity seem, alas! to think that they have little or nothing practically to do with the work of the Church; that by putting a chance penny, or an odd shilling, into the offertory bag, they have quite magnanimously discharged their divine obligations to the kingdom of Christ in this God's world. It is an abject self-deception, and it causes that creeping paralysis which has fatal issues. The Church is neither a sacerdotal caste nor an ecclesiastical make-believe. You, my brethren, are the Church. Ye are the blessed of the Lord; ye, ye and your children! you—every one of you—unless you idly abnegate your heaven-granted privileges—are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Every Christian is, or ought to be, God's missionary and God's priest. I have no hope for the Church of England till we all learn that the work of God must be done by the united efforts of all her members. It is the common duty; it is the universal command.

What, was it the clergy only whom Christ bade to feed His hungry, to give the cup of cold water to His thirsty, to visit His sick and His prisoners, to tend His little lambs, to rescue His lost ones, to further in every possible way His Kingdom? Every Christian, who is not deliberately selling his soul for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, should realise it as his indefeasible duty and priceless privilege to have a direct personal share in the common work of Christ — for this His Church — struggling against such colossal forces in the midst of His suffering and sinful world.

4. Oh if, in any measure, I could succeed in impressing this truth upon every heart, what a kindling of radiant light would it be; what a source of divine fruitfulness for us, and for our Church, and our dear native land! The Apostles were but fishermen and tax-gatherers—Galilean peasants, speaking a coarse provincial dialect—yet they kindled the light of Christ in city after city, till, like a beacon-fire flashed from hill to hill, it gleamed from Jerusalem over the habitable earth. Ah! if in these cold, worldly, degenerate days, we had but one tithe of their fervour and self-denial, how would all the kindreds of the nations come to bow before the Lord! And why should it be otherwise? Was it on the Apostles alone that God poured forth His Holy Spirit? Was it their brows alone which He mitred with His Pentecostal flame? Were none but that little band, so unlearned and ignorant, required to be Christ's

witnesses? or did Christ anoint us all to be His kings and priests, and to shine like lights amid the darkness of the world?

5. Yet, alas! what a satire it sounds to say that there is not one here present who is not bound, as the very law of his life, to be carrying on the battles of the Church Militant; the care for souls of the Church Pastoral; the witness for Christ of the Church Evangelistic; the large and self-denying generosity of the Church Beneficent! How cheap and mean, how conventional and insignificant, is the standard which most of us attain! How stunted and shrivelled is even the ideal which we set before us! How many of us are entirely satisfied with our fulfilment of what God requires of us, although—it may be amid lives of full-fed ease and absolute self-seeking; of vulgar hoarding or selfish squandering; perhaps of sinful self-indulgence and malignant baseness—we may not be able to put our finger on one nobly self-denying service we have ever rendered to the cause of Christ, on one adequate gift we have ever contributed to the needs of the Church of God! Such a shrunken thing in common society is the ordinary level of Laodicean Christianity! We were meant to be the salt of the earth. Yes! Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men!

6. And when we look round us—not with the flattering gaze of self-deception, or the stolid cal-

losity of custom, but with the open eyes of sincerity and truth—is there no reason to fear that the salt *has* lost its saltness? Among the gilded youth and women of fashion, in our upper and wealthy classes, is there not a much-lowered Christian standard, a growing carelessness about Sundays and public worship, a frivolous cynicism, a voluptuous self-indulgence, a hard selfishness? Among the middle classes are there not myriads whose hearts—while they worship their bank-books, and burn incense to their ledgers — are hard as the nether millstone against every noble spiritual impulse? In the poorest classes are there not millions who never enter a House of God, and slums, where nothing thrives but the triple-headed monster of vice, blasphemy, and drink? And, amid multitudes of social shames and perils, are not the great mass of the Christian laity looking on as though they were not their brother's keeper, and it were no concern of theirs? My brethren, these things ought not so to be! and if they continue so to be, be sure of this, that sooner or later—and indeed sooner rather than later—the awful day of the Lord will thunder and lighten upon England, and under His purging flame and mighty winnowing fan, the chaff shall be burned up with unquenchable fire!

7. The general lesson, then, which I would fain impress on you is, that the work of the Church of God in every branch of it is *your* work. Ask yourselves before God, every man in the deep of his

own heart, are you doing it? There is no great or small in God's sight. If He has given us but one talent, He requires faithfulness in the use of that alone. Not one of you is so young, so poor, so ungifted, in a position so humble, but what you can do for Christ and His Church something, however humble, which, if done honestly, would bring you the deepest happiness here, and joy unspeakable hereafter. Every one of you—the boy at school, the youth in his office, the clerk at his desk, the young man in the shop, the soldier in his barracks, the employer of labour, the father of a family—can help forward, and is most solemnly bound to help forward, the work of God. What art thou, and thou, and thou? A doer of God's work, or of Satan's? A profitable member of the Church and commonwealth, to be hereafter a partaker of the immortal glories of the Resurrection, or with only a name to live while thou art dead? A fruitful tree in God's fair garden, or a barren cumberer of the ground?

8. Oh that by God's grace even these poor weak words, rousing an echo in many souls, might be as a trumpet-call to every man and woman and youth in this congregation to be up and doing; to seek diligently how they may help the cause of Christ; to redeem each their own lives from meanness and self-seeking; from lingering in shameful contentment among the husks that the swine do eat. Oh that it might be as a message from God sounding in every ear, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee;"

not for the congregation; not for the man sitting by you; not for the woman in the next pew: but for thee—for thee, for thee! He wants *thee*, as though by my voice He were calling thee by thy name! Ask not what others are doing or leaving undone; I charge *thee*, fulfil thy ministry. Ask not "Lord, and what shall this man do?" but "Lord, what shall I do?" Say not "O God, I pray thee, send others into Thy vineyard," but "Here am I: send me!" And be sure that, if with ardent sincerity you desire to work, He will find you work to the infinite ennoblement of a life which, however well it may stand before men, may now be in His sight utterly contemptible, but which He would fain bless with the utmost blessedness, and crown at last with glory and honour.

My friends, I humbly desire that my words should be intensely practical. I might have dwelt on many special hindrances to the work and progress of the Church; on the unbelief and growing indifference caused by false human presentations of Christianity; on the too deep separations between class and class; on the unhappy divisions which rend asunder the peace of Christians; on the widening chasm between the clergy and the laity; on the want of elasticity and spontaneity in our services; on our lack of adaptability to the pressing requirements of the day; on the dangers of confusing religion, pure and undefiled, with the revival of dead and empty superstitions; on the peril of squabbling about obtrusive

human pettinesses, while the great ocean of human sin and human misery is casting at our very feet its miry and moaning waves. But all these dangers would vanish if we would but all feel the duty of taking a distinct personal part in the uncompromising battle with vice and cruelty and greed. Our tendency is to let good and evil lie flat together, side by side, in amicable compromise, instead of making good grapple with evil hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder, in a battle which knows no discharge. If Christianity is to win again her olden victories which overcame the world, she must recover something of her heroic activity, her splendid passion, her untiring self-sacrifice, her divine fanaticism; and rekindling the burning flame of her sacred enthusiasm, must remember that it was her very function to regenerate the world. Do not let us expand selfishness to infinitude by thinking only of our own salvation; but let us remember that Christ taught us by love to serve one another, and to go about doing good. There is a legend current in the Greek Church about her two favourite Saints, St. Cassian, the type of monastic, ascetic, individual Christianity, which

> "bids for cloistered cell
> Its neighbour and its work farewell;"

and St. Nicolas, the type of genial, active, unselfish Christianity. St. Cassian enters heaven, and Christ says to him, "What hast thou seen on earth, Cassian?" "I saw," he answered, "a peasant floun-

dering with his waggon in a marsh." "Didst thou help him?" "No!" "Why not?" "I was coming before Thee," said St. Cassian, "and was afraid of soiling my white robes." Then St. Nicolas enters, all covered with mud and mire. "Why so stained and soiled, Nicolas?" asks the Lord. "I saw the peasant floundering in the marsh," said Nicolas, "and put my shoulder to the wheel and helped him out." "You did well; you did better than Cassian," answered the Lord; and He blessed Nicolas with fourfold approval. It is like the legend of Abou ben Adhem, who saw the Angel writing in a book of gold the names of those who loved the Lord.

> "'And is mine one?' said Abou: 'Nay, not so,'
> The Angel answered. Abou answered low,
> But cheerly still, 'I pray thee write me, then,
> Among the lovers of my fellow-men.'
>
> The Angel wrote, and vanished: the next night
> He came again, with a great wakening light,
> And showed their names whom love of God had blessed,
> And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

One thing is certain—that the more truly and sincerely we love the Lord, the more thoroughly shall we serve our brother men. Not many years ago, a lay speaker at a Church Congress said "he was almost ready to sink with despair, when he remembered how often the public manifestations of the Church of England had been on the wrong side—on the side of privilege against right; on the side of ignorance against knowledge; on the side of restric-

tion against freedom; on the side of the few against the many." If that indictment be true, remember that it affects the laity even more than the clergy, in that as the people are, the priests will be, and the laity are more in number than the clergy by hundreds of thousands. And is there nothing to be done now? No deadly wrongs to be redressed? No drink-curse to be ameliorated or extinguished? No rampant vices to be smitten down with a strong hand? No reeking slums into which we must let the air of heaven, and the light of day?

> "Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the time,
> City children soak and blacken, soul and sense, in city slime?
> There, among the gloomy alleys, progress halts with weary feet,
> Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousands on the street;
> There the master scrimps the haggard seamstress of her daily bread,
> There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead."

Oh, there is a vast work always to be done! "The work is immense; the Master urgent; the day short; the reward infinite;" but, alas! alas! the labourers are remiss and few. If Church Congresses can rouse every one of us to feel our individual, our personal, as well as our common and corporate duty in the Church of God, they would indeed be boundless blessings. How soon would the Sun of righteous-

ness then burn over the dead fields of snow; how soon would the avalanche thunder down the barren mountain side; and where yesterday there was blank and freezing barrenness, to-morrow there would be green grass and golden harvests and purple flowers! When we contemplate how much work for Christ needs to be done, and how slothfully and conventionally we are doing it, the one prayer which we all need to offer with bent head and beseeching hand, both for ourselves, and for the Church of England, is that which the Prophet offered in the valley full of bones, so many and so very dry, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" We need, we constantly need, the outpouring of the Spirit of God—His revealing light; His purifying flame. Let us open our own hearts to His influence; if we each could feel it there, it would soon spread like a sea of light over the regenerated world.

II

"CALLED WITH A HOLY CALLING"

II

"CALLED WITH A HOLY CALLING"

"This honour have all His saints."—Ps. cxlix. 9.

Although I know the impatience of a young audience on a week-day morning, yet All Saints' Day is an anniversary of such exceptional importance and interest, that I must, for a few moments, draw your attention to some of its lessons.

All Saints' Day specially calls our thoughts to those who have gloriously won the sore battle of life, and whose memories glow like bright stars in the purple distances of time. It is only in the spectacle of men, who—in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil—have dared to be eminently good, that we can realise the true grandeur of humanity. To look at them, is to lift our eyes from the numberless mole-hills on every side of us to the mountain-summits; and from the leagues of bristling thistles to the Lebanonian cedars.

Discard at once from your minds on All Saints' Day the narrow notion of Canonisation. There has been many a glorious saint who never received the title; and there have been some who were not true saints at all, who have.

We commemorate to-day the multitude of God's elect, not only the handful whom the Popes have canonised. Think of all those in the Old Dispensation:—of Enoch, who walked with God; of Noah, the preacher of righteousness; of Job, the patient in affliction; of Abraham, father of the faithful; of Isaac, the peaceful; of Jacob, the struggling; of Joseph, the pure. Think of brave Joshua, and princely Gideon; of David, the penitential Psalmist, and Hezekiah, the brave Reformer; of Jeremiah, with his plaintive elegies, and Isaiah, with his words of flame; of Ezra, the religious teacher, and Nehemiah, the inspirer of his languid nation. Think of the warrior Maccabees, who saved their country; of Rabbis like the sweet and noble Hillel; of the wild Prophet of the Desert,

> "John, than which man, a sadder or a greater
> Ne'er to that day had been of woman born;
> John, like some iron peak by the Creator,
> Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn."

Then think of the Christian centuries:—The world needed the death-defying utterance of truth; and lo! the Martyrs dared

> "To flesh the lion's ravening jaws, and feel
> The sportive fury of the fencer's steel."

It needed to be taught the priceless value of the human soul; and lo! the Hermits gave up all, and thronged into the desert. The barbarians had to be converted; and hundreds of heroic Missionaries went

amongst them, with their lives in their hands, and altered the whole world's history, by leading the conquerors to embrace the religion of the conquered. The sepulchre of Christ had to be rescued, and lo!

> "Our old Crusading fathers,
> Fought for the love of God, and not for gold;
> May their faith, their love, their boyish daring
> Distance-mellowed gild the days of old!"

The Church sank into greed, and ignorance, and tyrannous worldliness, and she was awakened by the enthusiasm of men who gave up all for Christ. She lapsed into a chaos of lies and ecclesiastical rottenness; the Reformers purged away the accumulated dross from her densely-adulterated gold. She fell asleep in sensual apathy, and heaven-sent Evangelists fanned her dying embers into flame. She neglected Missions; and lo! a Carey and a Marshman, a Henry Martyn and a Heber, went forth to preach to her heathen dependencies the Gospel of the Eternal Lord. In somnolent routine she neglected the needs of the suffering and the oppressed; and lo! one after another, Christ inspired His humble fellow-workers with the enthusiasm of humanity, and made them feel that

> "The high desire that others may be blest
> Savours of Heaven."

These men established her Sunday Schools, and flung the nation's ægis over her misused children, and founded her Ragged Schools, and saved her from

"the guilt of using the arm of freedom to rivet the fetters of the slave." These, and not mere feeble reiterators of false shibboleths and drowsy repeaters of mechanical routine,—these are the men who have uplifted humanity!

Shall we not, at least to-day, raise our eyes to this galaxy of constellations? shall we not, from the miry marshes of human littleness, gaze upon these

> "Stars in the firmament, above us gleaming,
> Stars in the firmament, alive and free;
> Stars, and of stars the innumerable streaming,
> Deep in the deeps, a river in the sea"?

But if any mean utilitarian ask, "Of what use is the contemplation of the lives of the Saints to us?" I answer, first, that to look at their example *ennobles human life.*

1. It may be the best possible counteraction of the immeasurable meanness, vulgarity, and repulsiveness that welter on every side of us. On every side of us, through the fraud and malice of the devil, there are multitudes of men who live malignant and despicable lives. As we look at these we cannot but say with Tennyson:

> "However we brazen it out, we men are a little breed!"

But, amid these malarious marshes of common humanity, the Saints have left us living examples of spiritual and moral nobleness. Learned and unlearned, kings and beggars, sad and joyous, aged as St. Philip Neri, young as St. Rose, the youngest of

the Saints, not one of them has been vulgar, or greedily selfish, or basely uncharitable. All of them have been God's gentlemen; none of them pickers and stealers, liars and slanderers; all friends of man, defenders of the weak, redressers of human wrongs. Amid crowds of churls and mammon-worshippers, these heroes of unselfishness turned their steps towards the mountains, and lifted their eyes towards the sun. How much better is it to live in spiritual companionship with them, than with the many whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things!

2. And the thought of the Saints may not only ennoble our aspirations, but secondly, *they show us what man's true life is*:—It is the life in the spirit, not the life of sense; of generous self-devotion, not of vile pleasure, or of debasing greed. They turned from the Dead Sea apples, which fill the mouth with ashes and bitterness, to feed on the bread of heaven, and drink the crystal river of the water of life. They heard voices which we will not hear; they followed the beckoning hands which we cannot see. And so, instead of the debasing misery of the sated worldling, or the bitter cynic, they learned to cry, "Thou shalt show me the path of life: in Thy presence there is fulness of joy; and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

3. And the Saints not only ennoble human life, and show us the true ends of life, but, thirdly, *they demonstrate to us the splendid possibilities of life.*

They may convince us of the utter pusillanimity of moral despair.

> "Witness the men, whom at a word He gaineth,
> Bold, who were base; and voiceful, who were dumb;
> Battle, I know, as long as life remaineth,
> Battle for all,—but these have overcome!"

They were ordinary human beings like ourselves; tempted like us; feeble like us; like us in the midst of an evil world. Their passions were as strong and as persistent as ours; for *their* youth, no less than for ours, the songs of the Siren had a maddening sweetness, and the cup of Circe a transforming witchery. Yet they rose victorious over pride, and passion, and malice—they rose from meanness into nobleness, from the slime and venom of "men-slugs and human serpentry" into something of angelic splendour—by the same grace which Christ will give to us also if we seek it. And as they lean down to us from the golden cloud of witnesses, they cry aloud, "He who gave to us the victory, can give it also to you." You too, every one of you—"even the meanest and the most polluted—are "called to be Saints." Fancy not, for one moment, that your temptations are abnormal and exceptional. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is human (*ἀνθρώπινος*) "such as man can bear," "such as is common to man":—no temptation which it is not in your power to overcome; seeing that, with every temptation, God will also provide, not only *a* way

but *καὶ τὴν ἔκβασιν, the* way, the one special way, whereby to escape it.

4. Fourthly and lastly, the Saints not only ennoble life, and teach us the true aim of life, and prove to us the splendid possibilities of life, but they point us to Him who is the sole true source of life. For what are the Saints? At the best, as Luther said, they are but as "dew-drops,—sparkling points on the head of the Bridegroom, lost in the glory of His hair." Each of them does but contribute to us one grain of gold from the inexhaustible riches of His glory. Yet they teach us to *understand* that glory. We cannot gaze on the sun at noontide;—no! but when we see the sunlight glinting on the forest leaves; illumining the glory of the flowers; glimmering on the diamonds of the morning; flaming on the broad mirror of the sea; firing the high tops of the mountain-pines; kindling into vivid crimson the alpine summits; "carpeting the Western waves with glory, ere he deigns to set his foot upon them;" painting with unimaginable pageantries of gold and scarlet the evening clouds; lending a soft lustre to the planets as they roll; reflected on the full moon's silver shield;—then, first, we begin to apprehend how unemptiable is the fountain of the sun's glorious beneficence. Nor is it otherwise with the Sun of Righteousness, who has risen upon us with healing in His wings. In the noble calm of the Patriarchs who walked with God; in the enraptured songs and passionate devotion of

the Psalmists; in the life-long self-sacrifice of the Hermits; in the zeal of the heroic Missionaries; in the beauty, the humility, the sweet courtesy, the gentle forbearance, the boundless love, the holy purity, the grand self-conquest of all true saintly lives, we see the reflected glory of Him, and of Him alone—the Lord of our life, the King of our salvation, the Saviour of our souls;—of

"Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end."

Think then of these holy ones of God, to-day and oftentimes. Let it be your one aim in life to be noble, not mean; transparent, not dark with guile; pure and holy, not full of foul thoughts; gentle, courteous, pitiful, large-hearted, not overflowing with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; caring only for great things, not merged in the shallow mud of infinitesimal littleness; temperate in all things, not drunkenly and gluttonously self-indulgent; living to make all around you happier and better, not poisoning their lives with lies, or polluting them with vile example.

Then, what happens to you on earth, or how much men may, after their kind, revile and persecute you, matters nothing. Your very detractors shall, hereafter, say of you: "We, fools, accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. Now, is he reckoned among the children of God, and his lot among the Saints!"

III

WHAT IS RELIGION?

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

"If ye know that God is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him."—1 JOHN ii. 29.

A GREAT writer has said that there are some truths so true, that, instead of being prepared for use in the workshop of the mind, they are left to lie in the lumber-room of the memory, side by side with the most worthless errors. It is no paradox to say that the most vitally important of all truths are often ignored as mere truisms, though they lie at the basis of all that is most necessary for our peace in this life and our blessedness hereafter. To be able to grasp these truisms is to know the open secrets of holiness and happiness; and to honest and noble minds, unwarped by "the eternal Pharisaism of the human heart," God has made them so plain that the wayfaring man, yea, and even fools, need not err therein. The secret of salvation is nothing metaphysical; nothing recondite. It is not hard for even the most ignorant to understand. We need not soar into the empyrean to discover it, nor descend into the abyss;—"the Word is very nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

2. It is exactly such a truism, savingly healthful, yet fatally thrust into the background, which I would fain impress upon your memories this morning; yea, engrave upon your very hearts as with a pen of iron upon the living rock.

3. It is the truth that religious profession is one thing, and holiness another; that nominal belief in a creed is one thing, and righteousness another. We are so limited, so foolish, so conceitedly enamoured of our own ignorant and stereotyped opinions, that the mere statement of a truth so elementary as this throws many persons into an attitude of antagonism, as though some attack were to be made on their shibboleths, or their liturgiology. My object is purely practical. The truth that no unrighteous man—however orthodox his creed, or however accurate his rituals—belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven, is of such consummate importance, that in Scripture no lesson is more incessantly enforced. "Even the weakest disputant," it has been said, "is made so conceited by what he calls religion, as to think himself wiser than the wisest who thinks differently from himself; and he becomes so ferocious by what he calls 'holding it fast,' that when it does come out it is mangled, distorted, and extinct." Every religious controversialist seems to think that wisdom will die with him. What need is there for all this antagonism of fancied infallibilities? We all profess and call ourselves Christians; we all believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ:—and if we do that rightly we shall be saved.

4. But we are not doing it rightly, and our professed faith will be absolutely valueless if we are not living good lives. Faith without works is dead. Without righteousness and true holiness, all dogma, profession, routine, ceremonial—all the badges, all the symbols, all the distinctive banners, watchwords, and shibboleths of mutually anathematising sects—become not only worthless, but worse than worthless—become, in fact, a soul-destroying hypocrisy. They have not the slightest merit, nor do they win the smallest approval from God, unless and until they bring forth in us the fruit of good living to the honour and glory of His name. If they be unfruitful of love and godliness, they are of no more value in the eyes of our Master, Christ, than was the self-deceiving particularism of the Pharisees in numbering the threads of tassels, or tithing the stalks of pot-herbs. If, like those Pharisees, we neglect, for such cheap things, the weightier matters of the law, such as justice, mercy, and truth, we earn not the blessing of Christ, but "the sevenfold flash of His terrible invective" against the hypocrites who say and do not. If orthodoxy and ceremonialism had sufficed, there would have been no need whatever that Christ should die for our sins, and rise again for our justification; for they are easy and self-pleasing narcotics, and they abound even in the meanest and falsest of religions. Christ was

born, He lived, He taught, He died, He rose again, to enable men, by His Holy Spirit, to obey that moral law which God had given them in vain; and to win forgiveness for their sins and shortcomings by His infinite sacrifice. But it is a degradation of the majesty of God to suppose that He will accept formulæ and posturings, and "views" about this or that, as though they weighed as much as the small dust of the balance compared with simple goodness. "What that supreme and sacred majesty requires of us," said the Christian writer Lactantius, sixteen centuries ago, "is innocence alone." "Well, Master, Thou hast answered right," said the Jewish Pharisee when Christ had brought home to him the worthlessness of those nullities which he had been wont to magnify:—"Thou hast answered right, for there is but one God, and to love Him with all the heart, and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

5. The most momentous of all questions is this: "What shall I do to be saved?" Now, the answer of the Scriptures to that tremendously important question is one answer—clear, unvarying, incessantly repeated. Ask the mighty Moses. What is his answer? Not folios of casuistry, but the few words: "This do, and thou shalt live." Ask the burning Isaiah. What is his answer? "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" saith the Lord. "They are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them; but let judgment run down

like water, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Ask the holy Samuel. What is his answer? "Hath the Lord as great delight in sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Ask the eloquent Micah. What is his answer? "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Ask the sad Hosea. What is his answer? "The righteous man shall live by his faithfulness;" and "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Ask the royal Psalmist and sweet singers of Israel. What is their answer? "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His Holy Place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart; that hath not lifted up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour." Turn to the New Testament and the Gospel Dispensation. Ask St. James, the Nazarite, the ascetic, the Lord's brother. What is his answer? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Ask the great Apostle of the Gentiles, the man of the third heaven, and, taking the very seal of the covenant, which was to Israel the most sacred of all outward ordinances, he says, thrice over, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but"—what, then, is some-

thing?—but "a new creature;" but "keeping the commandments of God;" but "faith energising by love." Ask St. John, the Divine. What is his answer? "He that doeth righteousness is righteous," and "he that doeth righteousness is born of God." Ask the whole oracles of God from first to last, and their unanimous, unvarying answer is, that what God desires of us is not opinions, not fasts, or feasts, or ceremonies, or bowing the head like a bulrush, or the professed membership of this or that clique, or sect, or church, but to be good men and good women. If, then, in the conceit of religious opinionativeness, you call this "mere morality," correct your ignorance by God's teaching, not God's teaching by your ignorance. It was to enable us to live in obedience to His moral law—it was that we might be forgiven for having so constantly violated it—that the Son of God came down to die. For ask none of these, ask neither Law-giver, nor Prophet, nor Psalmist, nor Apostle, nor Evangelist, but ask the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Lord of Glory. What is His answer? He gave it, not once or twice only, but many times, and in many different forms. He gave it when He said, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." He gave it in His golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them, for this is the law and the Prophets." Will

you dare to question, to criticise, to explain away, to bury under cartloads of human rubbish, these plain answers of your Lord? If so, do not call yourselves His disciples. Whom did He set before us as His example of obedience to the essential Law of God? Not the Levite, in his sanctimonious formalism; not the Priest, with his incense, and his embroidered vestments; not the Pharisee, with his long prayers, broad phylacteries, and fasts twice in the week:—no! but the hated and heretical Samaritan, who, however much mistaken he might be in his opinions, and however neglectful in his rituals, yet stopped to tend the wounded wayfarer, and so kept the perfect law of love.

And when the young ruler came to Him, in excited haste, running, kneeling, prostrating himself, panting out the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" what was the answer? "If thou wilt enter into life"—what?—build seven altars, and offer on every altar a bullock and a ram? keep all the feasts, and fasts, and Saints' days, and make mechanical fetishes of two or of seven sacraments?—No! not one syllable about any ceremonial, or about any shibboleth, but simply, "Keep the commandments." All else—all petty and arrogant scrupulosity in every external duty and function—may be found, and often has been found, co-existent with a mean heart, with a false tongue, with base intrigues, with execrable cruelties, with the vile malignities of lying partisanship, with a sour temper, with an

impure life. But Righteousness has an everlasting validity.

No man—though all priests combined to burn, to torture, to execrate him, exactly as their predecessors combined to crucify their Lord;—no man, though he died amid screams of "Heretic,"—ever failed to be received, with the songs of angels, into everlasting felicity, if he lived in love towards God and humble service to his brother-men. "Mankind," says Bishop Butler, "are for placing the stress of their religion anywhere rather than upon virtue." Nevertheless "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed" — that is true religion. And "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things"—that is true religion. And "to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light"—that is true religion. To say, "Lord, Lord," and not to do the things which He says, is not religion; but "to love God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and to love one another, as He gave us commandment"—that is true religion. Be he Dissenter, or Anglican, or Romanist, the good man is dear to God, and the bad man, however accurate in creed, or careful of ordinances, is rejected of Him. John Howard was a Dissenter,

William Carey a Baptist, William Penn a Quaker, David Livingstone a Presbyterian, Father Damien a Papist; yet, though the Romanist adores the consecrated wafer, and the Quaker does not recognise the outward Sacraments at all, yet—if there be any truth in Scripture, any consolation in Christ, any compassions and mercies; if life be anything better than a hollow sham, and holiness anything more than an idle dream—these Christians (so valueless are forms and opinions without moral sincerity, so precious is true godliness!)—these Christians, whose religious views and practices were wide as the poles asunder, shall stand together in white robes and with palms in their hands, washed in the blood of the Lamb, before the sapphire throne. It will be no use then to come self-complacently before Christ and to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out demons, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" for if we have been base and bad in heart we shall still hear the words, "I never knew you." Many a self-complacent Pharisee might be glad to give all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, for the chance of standing hereafter by the side of men whom here he hated and despised as "these heretics," or "these publicans." Nay more, Christ plainly told us that many of the very heathen, if—through Him of whom they knew not—they have been enabled to attain to righteousness of life, shall be better off than many of the pompous professors who at once boast and

belie their privileges. For He said, "Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast out." I say plainly that I would rather take my chance hereafter with the holy Pagan Emperor Marcus Aurelius on that great day, than I would with scores of Popes of Rome and myriads of self-styled priests and religious partisans of this and of every age. "God," said St Peter, "is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him." "They ask me for secrets of holiness," said the saintly Francis de Sales; "for myself I know no other secret than to love God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself." "The meek, the just, the pious, the devout," said William Penn, "are all of one religion, and when their various liveries are taken off they shall meet and recognise one another in the world to come." "Do they profess repentance towards God," said George Whitfield, "and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of conversation? If so, they are my brethren." "How far is love, even with many wrong opinions," said John Wesley, "to be preferred before truth itself without love. We may die without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom, but if we die without love, what will knowledge avail us? Just as much as it avails the devil and his angels."

My friends, be like the nobler Berœans, and search

the Scriptures to see if these things are so. To the Word and to the Testimony! If any part of them speak not according to this teaching of Christ the Lord, it is because there is no light in them. But they do speak according to this Word in every book, and on every page. Are your hearts set upon right, O ye congregation? And do ye judge the thing that is right, O ye sons of men? Prove your ownselves. Pureness, kindness, those "are the two mighty wings of Christianity with which it winnowed and renewed, and still winnows and renews, the world." Are you pure? Are you kind? What are you in your home? What are you in your heart? What are you to your enemies? Are you humble, truthful, honest, generous, unselfish, kind? If so, you are not far from the kingdom of heaven, and though all the party-mongers and religious slanderers, and Inquisitors that ever were, should unite to curse and to burn you, and to cover your name with lies—as they have done ere now to nearly all of the best of the saints of God—nevertheless you shall hear with unimaginable beatitude the approving welcome of God, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" But if you be only hearers of the Word, not doers, deceiving your ownselves, what will all else avail you? Oh my friends, in these dangerous days let us examine ourselves, lest we be taking the substance for the shadow, and the shadow for the substance. Otherwise, we may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and

have all faith so that we can remove mountains; and bestow all our goods to feed the poor; and even give our bodies to be burned:—yet, without love, without obedience, without righteousness, we shall be after all but as a booming gong or as a clanging cymbal. But if we aim at true godliness, Christ will, by His Holy Spirit, enable us to attain to it; and in spite of every form of false religionism, we shall know, by our own blessed experience, that he who doeth righteousness is righteous, and he who doeth righteousness is born of God.

IV

"CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF"

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"For Christ also pleased not Himself."—Rom. xv. 3.

In this, as in every great text, there is unbounded food for thought; and the preacher must content himself with trying to bring out such fragments of exhortation as may seem helpful for our daily needs.

1. How can it be said that Christ pleased not Himself?

2. The answer to that question lies in the fact that, in the New Testament, which has taught us to understand our human nature far more clearly than men had ever done before, the word "self" is used in two widely different senses. It is sometimes used to describe our lower nature—our body with its appetites, our mind with its passions; and sometimes it is used of our highest self—our spirits, our eternal beings, the breath of God within us;—that whereby we have been created in His image, after His likeness. The lesson of the Gospel is, that then only do we become our true selves, when, having attained a tranquil mastery over all that

is evil or transient in our mortal nature, we at last unfurl

> "The wings within us wrapped, and proudly rise,
> Redeemed from earth, as creatures of the skies."

When evil concupiscence is under the absolute control of the moral law, when the carnal mind is brought into the obedience of the Divine Spirit, then first does man become all that God intended him to be. The heathen world never dreamed of that mystery which it has been given to God's children not only to believe but to experience—the mystery of that high spiritual condition wherein death is life and life is death; and where

> "God in man is one with man in God."

Hence, when we speak of "self," we may mean either the strangling load of our corrupt affections, or we may mean what St. Paul meant when he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." To attain to this condition involves the ultimate success, the final victory of life. Few, alas! in this world are they that find it. The majority of us live either the sinful life, enslaved by the lower passions of our nature; or the divided life, amid the struggles of a disintegrated individuality, which at one moment seems to be seated on high, and at another sinks into sensual mire. We must lose ourselves to find

ourselves. And it is because our false self is so often at war with our true self that the poet exclaims—

> "How great, how small, how abject, how august,
> How wonderful, how complicate is man!
> Helpless, immortal! insect infinite!
> A worm, a god!"

3. Now, when St. Paul here teaches us that we ought not to please ourselves, he is impressing on us what would be called the doctrine of Altruism, or living for others. The rule *vivre pour autrui* was announced by a modern philosopher as a new gospel, though it had been preached with infinitely more power and grace two thousand years ago by our Lord and His Apostles, under the older and sweeter name of Charity, or Love. Nay, even then, seeing that it is the essence of all moral life, it was not an absolutely new rule in the world either among Jews or Pagans. The Jews had already learnt that the whole moral law could be summed up in the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord God with all thy heart," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the heathen, too, had been taught the sovereign virtue of unselfishness. When Confucius was asked by a disciple to sum up in one word the law of duty, he answered, "Is not reciprocity such a word?" and by "reciprocity" he meant, "Thou shalt do to others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee." But what Christ's

Gospel did was not only to repromulgate and enforce the old and new commandment, "Love one another," but also to base it on those high grounds which alone could bring it into the range of daily practice. The Gospel taught us that mankind should live as one great, redeemed, spiritual brotherhood. Our life was not given us to be bounded by the narrow horizon of our own personality, but for the good of all. It was meant to be not only individual but collective. We sink indefinitely in the scale of being unless we think of the distant, the unseen, the eternal, and strive to bathe in that empyreal atmosphere the universal life of man. We shall be but poor, mean creatures if our cares and aims are absorbed in ourselves and our families, with little or no thought but for our temporal existence. There can be for us no lofty ideal, no complete satisfaction for the best needs of our being, unless we live in the constant sense of our immortality. Not till a man has become unselfish, not till he has risen above the natural instincts of his flesh and of his mind, can we say that he has attained the supreme of manhood, or understood the meaning of life. The rule for us all should be that which is given in the admirable old verses:

"Follow thy better heart,
  Follow thy better will,
And so thy better self
  In thy best self fulfil;
To thy best self be true.

Give thou thy better hand
  To all who needeth thee;
And to the better world
  Thy better angel be;
To thy best self be true.

To hold an honest hand,
  To own an honest name,
To feel an honest heart,
  Is more than wealth or fame;
To thy best self be true.

Howe'er the world may cry,
  However Pride may boast;
That thing is best for thee
  Which helpeth others most;
To thy best self be true.

So shall thy influence bless;
  And, when thy years are past,
So shall thy better self
  Thine angel be at last;
To thy best self be true."

By "ourselves," then, we mean the angel who holds us by the hand, not the serpent who would fain twine around our hearts: we mean not the ape, or the swine, or the tiger within us, but our divine, immortal nature, redeemed, purified, justified, sanctified by our Saviour, Christ.

4. But when we say that "even Christ pleased not Himself," we express something more transcendent than we can understand; something as immeasurable by human imagination, as God is immeasurable by man. It is impossible for us in the strongest

flight of our imagination to realise the height from which Christ stooped down, or to measure the deeps into which, for our sakes, He descended. St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, draws in dim outline the rounds of that stupendous ladder, when he says that Christ, being in the form of God, thought not equality with God a thing to grasp at, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave; was made in the likeness of sinful men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross. Deeper than that abyss of humiliation no earthly plummet can fathom; yet the earthly humiliation was as nothing compared with that first step, in which Christ *emptied Himself* of His glory. It is known in theology as the *kenosis*, or "emptying," that miracle of grace and mercy, by which at the Incarnation, the Lord of Glory came to earth as a new-born babe.

> "That glorious form, that light insufferable,
> And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
> Wherewith He wont, at Heaven's high council table,
> To sit in midst of Trinal Unity,
> He laid aside: and here with us to be,
> Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
> And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay."

Compared with this initial sacrifice, by which He "emptied His glory e'en to nakedness," all the rest was as nothing: seeing that every boon which earth can give, compared with heaven's beatitude, is but

as a water-drop to the oceans. Yet, since all which Christ gave up, when on earth He dwelt as a man with men, was meant for our example, there is nothing which we can study half so instructive as His human life. That life, in its essential principles, can be summed up in two short sentences: contemplated from within, "He pleased not Himself;" contemplated from without, "He went about doing good."

5. That life of lives—that perfect, sinless, human existence—divides itself into two periods: the private and the public; the growing manhood and the brief ministry. We usually concentrate our attention on the last three years. I think that we ought more often and more deeply to consider the previous thirty. It is a mistake to pass them over as uninstructive, because unrecorded. It would indeed be strange if the Son of Man had lived thirty long years on earth, and if, from all that period—tenfold as long as the actual ministry—we had nothing to learn! My friends, we should all regard those long, sinless years, which "breathed beneath the Syrian blue," as full of lessons inestimably precious for all mankind. Their silence is their most majestic eloquence. There is neither speech nor language, yet a Divine voice is heard among them. The lesson that "Christ pleased not Himself" is written large over their closed and golden portals. They appeal directly to every one of us. They are specially meant to teach a most needed lesson to

the countless multitudes. For His life was exactly what our life is externally, and what it ought to be morally and spiritually. What do we know of that life? This only—that Jesus lived as "the Carpenter of Nazareth," in obscurity and toil. Labour was despised in the ancient world; but because labour was from the Fall onwards life's primal law, therefore the Lord of All laboured, working with His hands, and made the drudgery of a common trade divine. Pride has ever been a chief taproot of human aberrations; and therefore, He whose infinite grandeur dwarfs all human greatness into insignificance, chose a lot of uttermost humility. Obscurity frets men, because their nature goads them ever on to self-assertion and self-importance; and yet, since all but the fewest, all their lives long, are utterly obscure, He whose glory was above all glory, preached the silent sermon that

> "'Tis better to be lowly-born,
> And live with humble dwellers in content,
> Than to be perked up in a glistering grief,
> And wear a golden sorrow."

Excitement is dear to our restless temperaments, because it absorbs our animal existence in the rush and plenitude of earthly nothings; and therefore, to show us that the true life is the interior life, the life of calm, and recollectedness, and communion with the Divine, He chose the sweet and ordered seclusion of lowly unvaried duties. By that un-

known life of the artisan, at dull, small, stupid, provincial Nazareth, Christ meant to teach us how the most commonplace and ordinary life, which is the life of the vast majority of us, may yet be luminous with all happiness, precious with wealth more golden than gold:—and how, in the sweet sanctities of the humblest family, we may all learn that lesson of love, which is heaven's purest beatitude, and earth's only prize. Subject to His parents, working with His hands, His life was "as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, and as lilies by the water-courses." He showed to mankind for ever, "that a man's life," a man's true life, "consisteth not in the multitude of things which he possesseth," but in possessing his soul in patience, and being faithful in the work, however lowly,—however in the world's eyes insignificant,—which God has appointed him to do.

6. So then, the first thirty years of our Lord's life on earth teach us that man is just as great as He is in the sight of God; and that no wealth, or rank, or fame, or power can make Him greater. The rest of His time on earth—the three years of the public ministry—emphasise the lesson that the outcome of life should be not selfishness, but service. For it is summed up in the brief epitome of two words, *διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν*, *pertransivit benefaciendo*, "He went about doing good." It was a work of infinite pity, of eternal tenderness. It is easy to love the beautiful, and the loveable; but Christ

came to show His love to those whom none had ever loved, and to love them as none had ever loved before. He had compassion on the hungry multitudes. Moving among the sick and the demoniacs, He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He loosed the bands of wickedness, and let the oppressed go free. To the cry of the miserable stricken leper, "If thou wilt, Thou canst cleanse me," came, prompt as an echo, the compassionate word of healing, "I will—be cleansed!" Even the lowest of the low, and the most fallen of the fallen, were not too low, not too fallen, for His divine and trembling pity. To the wretched adulteress, as she sobbed in her shame upon the Temple floor, He cried "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." He suffered the penitent, weeping harlot to "wet His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head." If we, indeed, care to follow Christ's example, it may be summed up in two monosyllables—Love; Serve. Yea, and we must, if need be, serve, as He did, even amid man's most perverse stupidity, and man's most rancorous ingratitude; and we must learn to love, as He did, with immeasurable forbearance, without hope of recognition, without the most distant thought of reward. So shall we be the sons of our Father in Heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

7. "Ah," you will say, "Christ did this, Christ could live thus, but how can we?" My friends, we miss

the meaning of Christ's life unless we remember that if He was the Son of God, He was also the Son of Man. He was the Lord Christ; He was also the human Jesus. It was *in* man that He conquered, *for* man, the foe. It was as man that He overcame the temptations of man. Nor must we think that men have never been able — imperfectly, yet in their measure exquisitely—to follow His example, walking in His steps. The beauty and instructiveness of the lives of the saints of God lie in this, that they were men like ourselves, weak as we are, tempted as we are. Yet they, too, pleased not themselves. They gave up for God's sake, and for man's sake, all that the natural and unregenerate man holds dear. And when I speak of the saints of God, I do not mean those only whose names shine, even in earthly annals, "as the beauty of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever," but even the most humble and the most obscure. Read the salutations in the 16th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The poor men and women there mentioned were mostly slaves and artisans, on whom the nobles and philosophers of the imperial city looked down as the dust beneath their feet; but these "faithful, who were not famous," live for ever on the page of Holy Writ, in pure and endless immortality, which who would exchange for the sceptres and diadems of earth? They are described as "beloved in the Lord," "fellow-workers in Christ," "approved in Christ," "the beloved and chosen in the Lord,"

simply because they "laboured," and "laboured much in the Lord," as the humblest of us all by His grace may do now and evermore. This life of love and service, as it is the life to which God calls us, so it is the only happy life. And this is the meaning enshrined in the ancient legend of your city.[1] A writer of genius has well emphasised its meaning. He makes the Lady Godiva plead with her hard husband, Earl Leofric, for mercy to the poor, and she says, "Oh, my beloved, let everything be a joyaunce to us; it will, if we will. Leofric, the high festival is strewn by the servants of God upon the heart of man. It is gladness, it is thanksgiving, it is mercy to the wretched and the poor. We will hold this festival; the guests are ready, we may keep it for weeks, and months, and years together, and always be the happier and the richer for it. The beverage of this feast, O Leofric, is sweeter than bee, or flower, or vine can give us. It flows from heaven, and in heaven will it abundantly be poured out again, to him who pours it out here unsparingly."

8. Here, then, is the character at which we ought to aim. The centre of gravity of our being must be shifted altogether from self to God. The result of such an aim—if ever we make the least advance in it as the years of life go on—will be as near an Imitation of Christ, as is possible to the weakness of our mortal nature. Then will our lives be one long and most blessed service. We shall have received

[1] This sermon was preached in Holy Trinity Church, Coventry.

into our hearts that most excellent gift of God in Christ, the gift of that holy, heavenly love, which suffereth long and is kind; which envieth not; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things; and which faileth not, when all things earthly fail, and cease, and vanish away.

V

OUR RELATION TO PAST YEARS

V

OUR RELATION TO PAST YEARS[1]

"Forgetting those things that are behind."—PHIL. iii. 13.

ON this first Sunday, which is also the first day of a New Year, let me ask you, my friends, to accept the earnest wish of my heart that you may all receive abundantly, during this year, that blessing from on high, that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that love of God, that fellowship of the Holy Spirit—which alone can bring any real or deep happiness to any human life. And I would not only wish you a happy New Year, but would gladly try to offer you such counsels as may, by God's blessing, deepen any happiness, and diminish any sorrows, which it may have in store for you or for me.

1. The beginning of a new year naturally makes us think of what time is—the past, the present, the future. Now time is an utter mystery. It is, in its essence, only a mode of thought—a purely relative conception. To the Eternal God—who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end—who sees

> "In the green the mouldered tree
> And ruined towers as soon as built,"

[1] Preached in Canterbury Cathedral on January 1, 1899.

to Him "is, and was, and will be, are but is." It is only "our weakness," which "somehow shapes the shadow Time." The present, for instance, might seem something very conceivable: yet what is it? It is; it is not. What *was* the present when this sentence began, is already the past. A flash, and lo! what shall be has been. It is the ticking of a clock which, at each tick, seems to say at once "For ever—never! never—for ever!" It has no independent existence; it is the instantaneous conflux of two eternities, the one stretching back before the birth of time, the other reaching beyond its close. Even in being born it ceases to be. Its existence is but as the throbbing light, the fading and flashing of two infinitudes. Like the column of smoke in the summer noon, or the cloud in the driving air-current, "which, momently condensed and re-composed, is the common phantom of a thousand successors," it has no substantive reality. It is like an immense solitary spectre, which overshadows us, standing behind all noises, all creeds, all weeping and laughter, all hopes and fears—

> "It has no shape; it has no sound; it has
> No place; it has no time; it is, and was,
> And shall be; it is never more or less."

The sands (says the poet) fall in the hour-glass; the shadows sweep around the dial; men wake and sleep, strive and regret, love and hate; and still the shapeless spectre stands there, till at last it beckons them, and they pass away. And the sands still fall in

the hour-glass, and the shadow still sweeps around the dial, and the clock still ticks:—and this is all! All—except that from this nothing hangs eternity!

2. But we will not lose ourselves in metaphysics. Though we cannot define the present in the abstract, we can define and understand the present hour, the present day, the present week, the present month, the present year, the present life—even though all these are but aggregates of those tiniest tickings of the clock. And since the great hammer-strokes have so lately beaten out the death knell of a departed year, and a new year shines before us, let us seize the golden sand-grains of the present, and learn, if we can, to avoid one or two at least of those errors to which the loss of precious years is often due.

3. Let us speak, this afternoon, of the errors into which we are apt to fall in looking back upon our past. Do they not, in the case of multitudes, take the form of unavailing regrets, and of unavailing—because despondent—remorse?

4. Unavailing regrets:—are not many lives spoilt by useless repining after what we never had, or what is now past and gone? Some men seem to live useless lives in the mere murmuring memories of the dead yesterdays. It is folly. It is to seek the spring among the fallen and withered leaves of autumn. It is

> "To search in last year's naked nest
> For the blue eggs it cradled."

How deep in significance was that saying of our Lord, "Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou Me."

(i.) Thus some men's lives are spoilt by unavailing regrets for a vanished prosperity. A young poet, who had got into trouble, and enlisted in the army, wrote over the manger of his troop horse, "*Eheu quam infortunii miserrimum est, fuisse felicem.*" Some men are always uselessly brooding over the ruins of their happier days—the better times when they had a higher position, and easier circumstances, and better chances. Yes, it is a trial to go all downhill in life, and specially when, as is so often the case, it is the result of a man's own fault; when he is beginning, before death, to possess the things done in the body; when the indolence of his youth has come to mean the poverty of his manhood; when the bad seeds of improvidence and self-indulgence are growing up in the thistles and ragwort of failure and destitution; when lost opportunities are yelping round him in the form of endless anxieties. But a happier past adds its sting to a blighted present, even when the loss has been the consequence of our faithfulness, and when we have to say, like the old Pope, "I have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile." Yet though it be pardonable and natural for us sometimes to mingle our tears for a moment with the waters of Babylon, beside which we sit in exile, while we hang our voiceless harps upon the dreary willows—natural to heave a

sigh, as we bow our heads and hand our broken swords to conquering destiny—it should only be with unconquerable souls. So long as true men walk, with bleeding feet, in the steps of their crucified Lord, they may recognise, even in the severest of their trials, the blessed furnace, wherewith God would make them as gold seven times purified in the fire. My friends, let the dead past bury its dead. Have faith in God—

> "With cheerful steps thy path of duty run;
> God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,
> But thou thyself would'st do it, could'st thou see
> The end of all events as well as He."

Bear up, then, my brother, if your lot seem sometimes hard. Be brave, be patient, acquire your true self, possess your own soul, repair what is reparable, hold fast and strengthen what remains;—and then, even if misfortunes have assailed you, it may still be said of you—

> "His overthrow heaped happiness upon him.
> For then, and not till then, he found himself,
> And to add greater honours to his age
> Than man could give him, he died fearing God."

(ii.) Others again are guilty of the folly of perpetually repining over the lost strength and brightness of their youth. "What can I do for you?" asked a friend of the satirist Wolcott, when he lay dying. "Give me back my youth," groaned the

unhappy man. Ah! that may not be. We may say with Henry Vaughan—

> "Happy those early days, when I
> Shone in my angel infancy;
> Ere I had taught my tongue to wound
> My conscience with a sinful sound,
> Or had the black art to dispense
> A separate sin to every sense,
> But felt through all this earthly dress
> Bright shoots of everlastingness."

But it is folly to linger on such thoughts. Why were we ever young, except that we might grow old? When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. It may be true that we have been, as we all are more or less, bad economists of happiness; but the golden dawn of life was meant to shed something of its brightness over the drizzling April day that follows. If God gave us a happy childhood, and a happy youth, let us regard them as an Elim, under whose palms we rested, and not turn into Marah waters the sweetness of their sapphire springs. As we go through the valley of Baca—*i.e.* of misery—let us use it for a well. Forward, onwards, upwards, forgetting those things that are behind, reaching forward unto those things that are before! Those are the mottoes of the Christian warfare, and of the Christian pilgrimage. Do not listen to the voices which call you back to a dead

past from what should be a more living and holy present—

> "Come back! come back! and whither back, or why?
> To fan quench'd hopes? forsaken schemes to try?
> Walk the old fields, pace the familiar street,
> Dream with the idlers, with the bards compete?
> Come back! come back!
>
> Back flies the foam; the hoisted flag streams back;
> The long smoke wavers on the homeward track;
> Back fly with winds things which the winds obey;—
> The strong ship follows its appointed way!"

(iii.) ~~Once again, there are many, both men and women, who~~ waste and weaken their lives in unavailing anguish for their lost beloved. The dear, dead faces haunt them; they are ever sighing—

> "But oh! for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

We have lost them; we cannot fill the void they have left; but they once were ours, and death is the destined end of life. To let the thought of them paralyse our duties, and poison our happiness, is not only useless, but faithless. Decay and loss are but the conditions of earthly existence. Even as the sun, from its high noon, sinks with paler light towards its decline;—even as the flower which was "the prodigal's favourite" of spring becomes the "miser's pensioner" of autumn—so with us, as the years darken round us, the clouds often seem to gather more dense and more chilly, round the afternoon of

our days. Is it sad? It would be indeed sad if we did not trust in God, and did not know that He will make up to us for all. Yes! He lives in our ruins to support them; in our loneliness to fill it with consolation; and even at the last, when we begin to draw near to those snowy summits of life where the ice has no earthly sunshine to melt it any more, He is our sun and our supreme reward. Yes! and "God is always in the meridian." That sun knows no parallax, or shadow cast by turning. Nothing good, nothing precious that we have ever had is lost. He restoreth our souls. He not only gives, but gives back; and if we will but seek Him, He will lead us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

"Thou unrelenting past,
Strong are the barriers round thy dark domain:
And fetters strong and fast
Hold all that enter thine unbreathing reign.
Thou hast my better years,
Thou hast my earlier friends, the good, the kind,
Yielded to thee with tears;
The venerable form, the exalted mind,
Thine for a space are they:—
Yet thou shalt yield thy treasures up at last:
Thy gates shall yet give way,
Thy bolts shall fail—inexorable past!"

5. But there is an error, as regards the past, even more fatal than unavailing regrets; it is unavailing, inactive, despondent remorse. We look back on our past years, their many mistakes, their many

shortcomings, their many sins. Perhaps we have lived the lives of small mean natures, full of vanities, faults, selfishness, envy, conceited infallibility, mean depreciation of others. Perhaps we have been full of egotism, of querulousness, of base self-indulgence. Conscience points us to a very ugly picture and says, "That is yourself!" Well it may be good for us to go sorrowing through the faultful retrospect if it makes us more humble, more kind, more forbearing, less small-minded and ignoble. But to paralyse the nerve of repentance by sinful despair is fatal. Can you alter that guilty past? Not one deed of it!

> "The moving finger writes, and having writ,
> Moves on; nor all thy piety and wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out one word of it."

Do not say, "My past must exercise a benumbing spell over my present; it has fatally moulded my actions, fatally maimed my free-will, and what I *have been* must make me for ever what I am." My friends, do you then not believe in the forgiveness of sins? You cannot undo the past, but you can repair it; you cannot forget your past sins, but you can repent of them, you can forsake them. To make this possible Christ died. By law your doom is fixed; but what apostasy is it to ignore that Christ hath set us free from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. Though you be blind, He bids you see; though you be a leper, if you cry to

Him He will touch you into health and purity again. With Him is forgiveness; with Him is plenteous redemption. The Son of Man hath power, even on earth, to forgive sins. It is a mere snare of the devil to try and *keep you* bad and miserable, because in the past you may have been bad and miserable. But Christ was manifested that He might destroy the works of the Devil. Go to Him boldly; approach with confidence to the throne of grace; and, as you give Him the handwriting which is against you, He will tear it asunder, and nail its torn fragments to His Cross. Then shall your sins be as though they had never been; and you shall be not forgiven only, but also washed, and cleansed, and justified, and sanctified in Him. I do not say, mark, that forgiveness of sins means the same thing as remission of their earthly consequences. From those, even to the grave, you may have to suffer, for "fruit is seed;" but He can overrule even the painful consequences of sin; and then, in a life which may hitherto have been barren of good, "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree;" and even the wilderness and the solitary place shall blossom as the rose.

6. Let me, then, in conclusion, recall to you those blessed words, "The old things have passed away; behold they have become new." Begin the new year with new hopes, not worldly hopes, but hopes the dew of whose birth is of the womb of the morn-

ing. Seek God with all your hearts, and those hopes shall be true and not vain; you may trust their holy sorcery; and "one day you shall find them all, with folded wings, spangling the sapphire dusk whereon stands His throne, who is our home." Begin the new year also with new resolutions—resolutions made with strong purpose, yet in humble sincerity; not those miserably deceptive ones which carry in themselves the secret determination of their own unreality. Begin the new year also with new efforts, purged by inspiring faith from predetermined failure. Above all, try to begin the new year with a new heart; not the old heart, so proud, so deceitful, so crowded with idols, so eaten out by vanity and corruption:—but with a heart of flesh, the heart of a little child; a heart full of gratitude to God, of loyalty to Christ, of obedience to the guidings of His Holy Spirit, of humble love to your fellow-men. On this first day of a new year, one more folio is placed by Time, the recording angel, on the shelf of our little lives. In those past folios are written our life-histories; all the tragedies of our career; all the petty and deplorable comedy; all the joy and grief; the struggle and failure; the temptations conquered or yielded to; the doubts and fears;—the few, oh! the very few, good, generous, and noble deeds; the many bad and base ones; the few wise and noble words; the many mean and spiteful ones:—all are written there, as with a pen of adamant, upon the rock for ever. Oh! how frightful would it be for us

if they were not in His merciful keeping, who can blot out the handwriting which condemns us, and wash those records white in the blood of His dear Son!

"Whose hand shall dare to open and explore
Those volumes closed and clasped for evermore?
Not mine! With reverential feet I pass;
I hear a voice that cries, Alas! alas!
Whatever hath been written shall remain,
Nor be erased, nor written o'er again;
The unwritten only still belongs to thee;—
Take heed and ponder well what that shall be!"

VI

THE YOUNG RULER

VI

THE YOUNG RULER[1]

"But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments"—
MATT. xix. 17.

THERE is something inexpressibly touching in the simple, natural, deep-reaching narrative of the Young Ruler, who came to Christ with hurried eagerness, running, kneeling, prostrating himself, because he knew that Jesus was about to depart from Galilee, and he might never have another opportunity of questioning Him. So he panted forth his passionate question, "Good Master! what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Would to God, that, during this Lent, on this Ash Wednesday, ere yet once more a great opportunity shall have vanished into the "dark backward and abysm of time":—would to God that many of us here present had but so much of the Young Ruler's spirit as to lead us so passionately to desire from Jesus an answer to the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

2. Surely it is a tremendous question! Human

[1] Preached on Ash Wednesday at Canterbury Cathedral, February 15, 1899.

words could formulate no question of more momentous import. And, perhaps, some one of you thinks, "Oh that I could put that question to Christ! What would I not give, if, like that youth, I could fling myself on my knees before Him, could cling to the hem of His garments, and could cry to him, 'Lord, dear Lord, I am very sinful; I am tired of myself; tired of the regret, the struggle, and the failing; tired of the years which the locust hath eaten: Lord, what must I do, oh, what must I do, to inherit eternal life?'" Do not many of you think that you would give up years of your life, if you could but have one half-hour of direct personal intercourse with your Saviour, and could but pour out your burdened hearts in tears upon His feet?

3. My friends, the privilege, the possibility are yours already! You may have your wish, and much more than your wish. He will, if you truly seek Him, be with you now, with you always, more nearly with you, yea, *within* you, than He could be by physical presence. You are better off, every one of you—you may have greater, richer, more continuous opportunities of coming to Jesus than that youth had. You can ask Him, now and always, the tremendous question. But when you hear His answer will you obey it? I know you will if He answer you according to your idols; but how if His answer bids you cast all those cherished fetishes to the moles and to the bats? It is most easy to deceive ourselves with the mere valueless form of

godliness, and yet to be to every good work reprobates. "*Quod volumus*," said St. Augustine, "sanctum est." What we *wish* is what we *like;* what we find easy and agreeable is our holy thing. But how if Christ bid us do something which we utterly *dislike*, something which runs counter to the religionism on which we pride ourselves? Will you obey His voice, then? or will you, like the young ruler, go away very sorrowful, because you value all this dross and tinsel of your own likings and opinions as though they were great possessions?

4. Well, at any rate come to Christ this evening, with that eager youth, and hear Christ's own answer.

"What good thing must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Very likely the question involved a mass of confusions. The questioner perhaps fancied that heaven could be won by formal actions, and outward rites, and quantitative merit. Yet the Prophet Micah had taught men, centuries before, that this was a fundamental error. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings? with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Nay, no such things as these; but "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to

walk humbly with thy God?" Sacrifice is nothing, and less than nothing, without obedience. Life eternal is not to be gained by outward conformities. "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And since that knowledge of God in Christ can only be obtained by obedience to His will—since "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"—since "He that doeth righteousness is born of God"—therefore, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

5. There, then, is Christ's answer to the question of questions. "The commandments!" The young ruler, hearing that answer in its bare, unqualified, unmistakable simplicity, was quite frankly amazed. He was like the child in the poem, who having been often told of the glory and majesty of the sea, on being led to the shore, innocently exclaims, "Is *that* the mighty ocean? is that all?" Keep the commandments! is that all that Jesus had to tell him, when he had gone to Him—

> "Seeking for some great thing to do,
> Or secret thing to know"?

Surely the great Teacher could not mean anything so commonplace, so elementary, so extremely ordinary as those old "few words" which he had learnt to lisp, ever so many years ago, at his mother's knee!

6. Yes, but Christ did mean that! And when the

young ruler said to Him, in incredulous astonishment, "Which?" Jesus answered, "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet;" and that all-comprehensive, universally-violated eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Most elementary of all laws, laws which we might write on the palm of one hand, which yet, in spite of our high-flown shibboleths and formal ceremonies, we all daily violate—just the law of kindness, the law of purity, the law of honesty, the law of truthfulness, the law of contentment! Are we striving with all our hearts to keep these plain, simple, elementary commandments? If not, however self-asserting be our orthodoxy and our "churchmanship," let us beware lest it should be said of us, as of the Israel of old, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips,—but their *heart* is far from Me."

7. Well, if that was really all that Christ had to say to him, the young ruler was utterly disappointed. Why, he said, with incredulous and almost scornful astonishment, "All these have I kept from my youth." Had he indeed? Poor ignorant young Pharisee! all the more helplessly ignorant because he thought he knew, and did, so much more than other people. Yet, after all, he was probably better than many of us! He *thought* he had kept these commandments; he was no vulgar profligate, no

sham religionist, no conventional worldling. And so Jesus, looking on him, loved him, and made the youth's conscience luminous by flashing into it one supreme and single test of sincerity. "Poor youth! dear youth! so the simple commandments of God are not enough for thee? Thou aimest at something higher and more heroical in religion than this." Well, but—and may we not imagine the tender, loving, human smile with which Jesus said it? the gentle pitying smile of an irony which pierces but does not wound—"One thing thou lackest. Go and sell all that thou hast, give to the poor, and come follow Me." Now, the youth had his test! At once his countenance fell, he shrank from the sacrifice; he had got what he asked for, but could not face it; he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. With bent head, and slow reluctant steps, he went away: he chose mammon rather than Jesus; he preferred to be rich among his fellow-men rather than to be rich towards God. He made "the great refusal," and the eye of the stern mediæval poet followed him in imagination, and saw him among the neutrals, the trimmers, the facing-both-ways, the neither-one-thing-nor-the-other, hateful alike to God and to his enemies, who are whirled aimlessly round the outer edge of the abyss, following the giddy flutter of the sooty flag of Acheron. But, ah! not so. I will not believe that Christ would leave unsaved at last the youth whom, looking on, He loved. Doubtless he went away to

learn, by God's grace, that he had *not* kept the simple ten commandments; that he had never even understood their length and breadth, and depth and height; that he lacked not only one thing, but many things; that never having truly loved his brother whom he had seen, he had not truly learnt to love God whom he had not seen. He had yet to discover in deep humility that he must perform aright the most rudimentary duties before he could go to Christ and ask for more searching tests. He went away, we trust, to learn all this, and to enter, at last, into the joy of his Lord.

8. Now, if I were about to offer to you to-day this test of Christ, I might show how many—taking it quite literally—have earned from God, who will be no man's debtor, their immeasurable recompense. The happiest men, as well as the noblest, on this earth have never been the idle, the self-seeking, the self-indulgent, the average Laodiceans, the party religionists, the professional slanderers, the greedy mammon worshippers, the self-indulgent Sadducees. No! but men who, like St. Paul, or St. Benedict, or St. Bernard, or Henry Martyn, or Charles Gordon, have given up all for Christ, and gained even in this life more than all from His sufficing love. And can *we* afford to judge and condemn the young ruler for his shortcoming? Nay, if I were to offer you the test of Christ on a millionfold lower scale, and only to tell you to test yourselves by something in comparison quite infinitesimal, would you do it?

If I were to ask you, for instance, to put into the offertory to-night a sovereign, or half-a-sovereign, or half-a-crown, which many of you would never so much as miss, to help the work of Christ in the world;—or to give up smoking, and strong drink, and all mere self-indulgence during Lent, and give to God what you would thereby save—is there one of you in a hundred who would not immediately begin to make excuse? Till you have learnt even to flutter as sparrows, it would be absurd to offer you this test of Christ, and to bid you soar as eagles. Well, then, let us begin on the lowest scale. I do not yet say to you "Sell all that thou hast," but "if thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*." Have you begun with that? Have you begun to begin with that? You must get quit of the quotidian ague of the world's falsity, and the creeping paralysis of its purely conventional religion, before you can prove yourself to be "God's servant by election, God's image by beneficence." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Instead of saying "Lord, Lord," and pleasing yourself with self-deceiving pretences, if thou wouldst even *enter* into life, keep the commandments!

And if you really try to keep this test of Christ's, which the young ruler despised so much, you will find it quite hard enough. Successfully to conquer temptation, if you have once got into the habit of yielding to it, will require all that Christ meant by

cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye. Do you sincerely desire to make Lent a reality? then begin it to-day by making, on your knees, a solemn vow to God that you will use it in the strenuous—even if need be the agonising—endeavour, to win a secure conquest over your besetting sin. Have you a bitter enmity in your heart? Cast it out, and go forgive your enemy. Do you delight in mean criticisms and misrepresentations? Set a watch at the door of your base and slanderous lips. Are you a swearer? Determine, on your knees, to-night, by God's help, to conquer for ever that senseless habit of blasphemy. Are you a better and gambler? Go home, tear up your cards, and your betting-book, and abandon that brainless and degrading excitement. Are you a loafer and lounger? Vow to redeem the time ere it be too late. Are you a drunkard, or beginning to get an ugly fondness for drink, and so being dragged, as by a demon's hand of fire, nearer and nearer to the edge of the abyss? Then take the temperance pledge at once, and so save yourself, and all whom you love. Are you getting fonder and fonder of money? Break off the low greed by acts of generosity. Are you impure in thought, word, or deed? Cry, from the very depth of your soul, as the leper cried to Christ your Saviour, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cleanse me," and you shall hear prompt as an echo His blessed words, "I will! Be clean!" So keep Lent by the expulsion of base thoughts; by the con-

quest of evil habits, unkind practices, unjust gains; by giving the cup of cold water in Christ's name to Christ's little ones. So keep Lent; so begin to enter into life! For Christ's message to you this Lent is, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" and to those who seek to be the servants of God, "His commandments are not grievous." The struggle, in proportion to its sincerity, will bring you peace and victory now, and hereafter free entrance into the joy of your Lord.

VII

HE THAT OVERCOMETH

VII

HE THAT OVERCOMETH[1]

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things."—Rev. xxi. 7.

He that overcometh—what? The answer is supplied in many passages of the writings of St. John. The promise is to him who overcometh the spiritual enemies of man—the world, the flesh, and the devil; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. To them who thus overcome are promised white raiment, and the water of life, and the hidden manna, and an unfading crown, and the morning star. In the next verse they are contrasted with those unhappy ones who are overcome. These are described in four pairs—the cowards, who are afraid to do their duty, and the unfaithful who are false to it; the abominable and the murderous; the depraved and the devilish; the idolaters of the world and all who love lies. No crown, no palm, no hidden manna, no water of life for these; their part not only shall be, but already *is*, in that gehenna of wicked hearts which is the second death!

2. "He that overcometh"—what? That which

[1] Preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge, June 14, 1896.

each of us has to overcome may be summed up yet more briefly: it may be compressed into a single monosyllable—he that overcometh *self*. In self-conquest all other spiritual conquest is involved; he that has gained perfect self-mastery is the most supreme of kings.

> "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead men to sovereign power."

3. In the window of a room in Queen's College, Oxford, is an inscription recording that the room was once occupied by our young hero-prince, Henry V., who is finely described as *Victor hostium et sui*, "Conqueror, not only of his enemies, but of himself." He conquered his enemies in the glorious victory of Azincour; but the conquest of himself after the wild follies of his youth—the turning of that rout into resistance, and of that resistance into victory—required a far intenser struggle. How many of the world's laurelled victors have driven their foes before them like chaff in the battles of the warrior, and have yet hopelessly succumbed to the foes in their own hearts! Heroes before the storm of war, they have been as beaten hounds before their lower self—

> "This coward, with pathetic voice,
> Who craves for rest, and ease, and joys,
> Myself, arch-traitor to myself,
> My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
> My clog whatever road I go."

Alexander the Great, who routed the hosts of

Persia, and founded one of the most colossal empires of the world before he was thirty-three years old, was also Alexander the little, who, hopelessly defeated by his own baser instincts, "died as a fool dieth," drunken and debauched, at Babylon. Napoleon the Great, who won a hundred battles amid all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war, was yet Napoleon the little, who, in his exile on that Atlantic rock, showed so little of the most ordinary magnanimity that he condescended to ignoble squabbles and most petty spite. On the other hand there have been men, not a few, who, amid apparently absolute defeat, have been more than conquerors. He who would know the real meaning of success must reverse the judgments of the world. You may remember that passage, in one of the most beautiful of modern fictions, where a hunted squalid enthusiast is saved from murder by a fair youth who stands at the summit of earthly prosperity. But next day the wretch, as men thought him, says to his deliverer, "Do you think that last night when, beaten, crushed, and almost breathless in the midst of a bloodthirsty and howling crowd, I was dimly conscious of help, and looking up saw you, in the glare of the lanterns, in your courtier's dress of lace and silver, calm, beneficent, and powerful for good, you did not seem to my weak human nature, and my lower instincts, beautiful as an angel of light? Truly you did. Yet I tell you, speaking by a nature and in a voice more unerring than mine, to the Divine vision, of us two

at that moment, you were the one to be pitied—you were the outcast, the tortured of demons, the bound hand and foot, whose portion is in this life, who, if this fleeting hour be left unheeded, will be tormented in the life to come." Yes! the noblest of earth's victors have been earth's victims; those whom society has hated most, and on whom it has spat most often; those who have stood pilloried on infamy's high stage, those who, hounded to death by priests, and shouted out of life with the roar of mobs, have ended their earthly trials in the dungeon, or at the stake. It is around their brows that the brightest amaranths have been wreathed by angel hands. "Call us *sarmenticii* and *sèmaxii*," says the fervid Tertullian, "taunts derived from the fagots with which we are burned, and the stakes to which we are tied. It is the robe of our victory, our *palmata vestis*, our triumphal chariot."

Is not the life of Christ the eternal antitype of these happy miseries, of these inconceivably successful failures? Let no one suppose that the ideal of the Cross is an ideal of abjectness even on this earth. What the world calls defeat, in the cause of righteousness, is the most eternal of victories. Those so defeated have felt, amid their worst anguish, a joy passing the joy of harvest. They have been, as Dante says, "*contenti nel fuoco*," happy in the fire; and there has often been a radiancy on the faces of martyrs as they have uplifted their trembling hands out of the flames,

such as has never gleamed beneath the coronals or diadems of earthly glory. God's promises never fail. The devil's always do;—even in the moment of fruition they turn to curses in disguise; "their enjoyment bitterly disappoints at the time, their consequences cruelly torture afterwards, their effects deprave for ever." The devil has nothing to offer but Dead Sea apples, which at the first taste crumble into dust and bitterness. Happiness he never gave, and he cannot give. The good man "having nothing, yet possesses all things." The bad man, conscious of the throbbing plague-spot in his own heart, feels his selfish vile delights dying and turning to carrion, even while he indulges them, and—

> "The worst of miseries
> Is when a nature, framed for noblest things,
> Condemns itself, in youth, to petty joys,
> And, sore athirst for air, breathes scanty life,
> Gasping from out the shallows."

4. "He that overcometh." Strange mystery, that the worst enemy whom we have to overcome is ourselves; our own bad passions; our own evil nature. Strange that the inmost grandeur of our being—all that constitutes our eternal life—is not given us with ourselves, but has to be acquired by us. We have, so to speak, to earn the essential reality of our own souls. For our souls are territories in which every inch of frontier will be disputed by strong, watchful, and malignant enemies, who, if once admitted, can only be driven out with difficulty, and

inch by inch. And the reason of this strange anomaly is that our nature is not simple but complex, so that its blessedness can only result from the harmonious inter-relation of its various forces. We have only acquired ourselves when we have secured the unquestioned supremacy of that which is spiritual and eternal within us, and can keep our baser desires in resolute control.

To borrow Plato's emblem, nothing is more fatal than to pamper within us the lion, and feed the many-headed beast, while we weaken and starve the man. The ideal of all who overcome is set forth by the sculptor in the statue of Him who alone perfectly overcame, in "Le Beau Dieu," on the west front of the cathedral of Amiens. He is not dead, but alive for evermore; not livid and convulsed, and agonised, but in the fulness of Divine manhood and eternal conquest. In His left hand is the Book of the Eternal Law; His kingly right hand is upheld to bless. Around Him blossom the emblems of life and fragrancy, the Vine with its purple clusters, the Lily of Innocence, the Rose of Holy Joy. The Lion of Pride, and the Dragon of Passion, subdued into noble service, support His feet; but He tramples into annihilation beneath Him the basilisk of rebellious insolence, and the mud-bred adder of sensual corruption. Let the wild beast or the monster triumph over the controlling reason of any one of you, and you will sink into a degradation worse than is possible to the beasts that perish.

On the other hand, acquire in Christ's strength a tranquil empire over yourselves, and then to you, in the superabundance of life, and the fulness of spiritual joy, shall the promise be fulfilled: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet."

5. "He that overcometh." If we look around us do we not see that every human being is in one of three conditions—that of defeat; that of uncertain struggle; or that of assured victory? Blessed, indeed, beyond words to utter, are they—alas! are they not the few?—who have attained to that third condition! But as we consider those three states of the soul, shall we not ask ourselves "In which state am I?" Is not God asking every one of you, at this moment, in which state are you, and you, and you? Can you evade putting to yourself—to your own inner consciousness—the question I put to you in God's name?

(i.) The condition of defeat combines in itself the spectacle of all the most terrible mysteries, and all the most consummate tragedies of our earthly life. Defeat has many degrees; but it exists always when a man has sunk to the hapless indulgence of his lowest impulses, which (in the phrase of Milton) "delight to exercise over him a bestial and raving tyranny." Well may Shakespeare exclaim—

> "Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core, yea, in my heart of hearts."

The duty imposed upon us by Nature, by Reason, by Conscience, by Scripture, by every voice of God within us and without, is to make our passions "come to heel by a strong will, the servant of a tender conscience." The man who stimulates, who tampers with, who makes concessions to, the lower instincts, is lost. For as Aristotle says, *Εὐκατάφοροί ἐσμεν πρὸς ἀκολασίαν μᾶλλον ἢ πρὸς κοσμιότητα.* "We are naturally propense to over-indulgence, rather than to moderation." The *φρόνημα σαρκὸς*, which "some do expound, the sensuality, some the concupiscence, some the desire of the flesh," is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The only way for a man to gain possession of himself is strenuously to resist the beginnings of evil; to stem the bad propensity at its source; to crush the unborn serpent in its gleaming shell. To parley with the devil in our hearts, is to betray to him the fortress-sanctuary. It is given to no man to make harmless covenants with death, or safe agreements with hell. For instance, the world's sad experience proves how deadly is the strength, how frightful the tyranny of sensual impulses. Physicians tell us that nearly all the multitudinous diseases, and sundry kinds of death, which cause men to lie in hell like sheep;—which poison the blood, which sap the strength, which desecrate the soul, which cause the envenomed dart of sin to strike through the liver, which defile and scorch the memory with sluices of fire from the Lake of Phlegethon, which fill

men's loins with the sin of their youth, which shall lie down with them in the grave—arise from those guilty indulgences, from gluttony, from drunkenness, from impurity. Yet no human being was ever born, who, having been, as all have been, once innocent, could not have lived, as hundreds of thousands have lived, pure and holy lives. But there is only one condition of being able to do so. It is to resist; to harden ourselves against ourselves; to avail ourselves, above all, of that divine grace which is within the reach of all who seek it. If any youth is senseless enough to think that he may plunge into the rushing stream, yet not be swept away by its resistless current; that he can walk in self-created darkness along the edge of the precipice, and have no shattering fall; that any chance band of flowers will be strong enough to hold in leash his full-fed temptations when they crash out upon him, "terrible and with a tiger's leaps," he is what Scripture calls "a fool." "He that trusteth in his own heart," says Solomon, "is a fool." "Can a man take fire in his hand, and not be burned? Can he touch hot boiling pitch, and not be defiled?" Is it sense to sit on the den of the cockatrice, and stare into the eyes of the basilisk? How can he escape the shame of the unclean, who is ever voluntarily revelling in corrupt imaginations? Has there ever been any man who thus laid waste the inner sanctities of his moral being, and yet did not sin in outward act? Ah no! as James, the Lord's brother, warns us,

"Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death."

(ii.) But there is a second, and perhaps commoner condition than that of utter defeat: it is that of undecided struggle. The man who has once suffered the wild beast of passion to make its thick carnivorous roar heard in his heart, has disturbed within himself the due equilibrium of his being—he has rebelled against the indefeasible autocracy of righteousness. Far more perilous to *him* is the warfare, which has no discharge. It is incomparably more easy to stand firm, than to restore a battle array which has once wavered under the inroads of the enemy. That is why Scripture says "Enter not into the path of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." And if you would see a pathetic description of the shame and the peril which attend this undecided, this amphibian, this half-and-half, this to-and-fro-conflicting, this neither-one-thing-nor-the-other, this facing-both-ways, this millionth part for God, and two-thirds for the devil, and all for self—condition of life, read St. Paul's sad confession—"To will is present with me, but how to do that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. With the mind serve I the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of

this death?" Oh! if you would not lead a frightfully imperilled life, you must decide between the *Christ* within you and the *Adam* within you; between "the angel who grasps us by the hand and the serpent who has us by the heart." It is the tampering with temptation in the thoughts which accounts for the frightful phenomenon of sudden exposure and ruin which I have seen in the case of men, who, all their life long, have seemed to be walking in the odour of sanctity. How often does the devil strip off at last the cloak of religion "doubly-lined with the fox-fur of hypocrisy"! How does he confront his victims with their secret sign-manual to the bond which they have been so shy to own!

(iii.) The third condition, that of settled victory, alone represents the supreme of man. He alone has achieved the great end for which God created him, who, by armed watchfulness, has cast out the devil, who would seize his soul. Such victors are they, whom, in the Apocalypse, St. John describes as the radiant company of the pure and undefiled. This is why our Lord said, "By your endurance acquire ye your souls:" and the poet does but echo His words when he sings—

> "Resolve to be thyself; and know that he
> Who finds himself loses his misery."

Another poet describes the opposite condition when he speaks of one who lived to pleasure and not to God, as—

> "Lord of himself, that heritage of woe!"

6. But perhaps some of you may be saying in your self-deceiving hearts, "What do we care for all this talk?" One thinks, "I am young and strong, I mean to have my fling." And another, "I am clever. I mean to go to the Bar, to enter Parliament, to write for the Press, to invent malicious epigrams, to write slashing articles on men who were famous before I was born, to make money, and a name." And another, "I am well off. I mean to race, and bet, and gamble, and drink, and see life, and enjoy myself. When I am used up, it will be time enough then to think of death, judgment, and eternity." It may be that some of you are listening to the seductive whisper of the fiend, who, fooling you to the top of your bent, says to you, "You are a fine young fellow; eat, drink, enjoy yourself, the rest is nothing." And so you bid God await your leisure, and when you have poured the brightest wine of life as a libation on the devil's altar, perhaps you will condescend to give to God the ragged lees. Ah! all this may seem well to you during the spasm of youth's brief indulgence, during the glamour of youth's brief dream; but if so, what frightful bankruptcy awaits you! How, like all such before you, shall you sit wretched amid the ruins of your life! With what anguish shall you flee into the inner chamber to hide yourself! The leaden foot of Retribution lingers; but by what spell shall you, alone of all men, escape her strong grasp upon your shoulder, her stony glare into your face,

the whistling of her snaky scourge, at last the smashing force of her iron hand? You do not believe it now; but I, and all of us who have reached life's evening, have seen such cases again and again—

> "I fancy Cuthbert's reddening face
> Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
> Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
> An arm in mine to keep me to the place;
> That way he used.—Alas! one hour's disgrace!"

I recall the splendid young athlete, a very idol among his school-fellows, and the tears of anguish which he wept when I met him next, a miserable and blighted man:—And now he is a ruined exile beyond the sea. I remember the brilliant scholar, with the highest success before him, who wrote his begging letters in eloquent Latin, and died a sick pauper in a London hospital. I knew the man of powerful genius who, so ruined by drink, sank to one of those low London lodging-houses, into which is swept the coagulated scum of human misery and shame. And *he* begs his bread in the streets; and *he* is in the cell of the lunatic; and *he* wears the felon's garb; and *he*, while yet an undergraduate, shot himself in his own rooms—and ah! that splash in the black midnight river; that mangled form which lay before the rushing train! I will pause. Yet to every one of you who are young, as for all of us who now are old, the book of personal, of universal experience, will confirm the warnings of all history and all biography. You will say, "Such cases are

rare." They are, alas! by no means rare. But, oh! I know not whether the lot of those is not even more agonising, who, feeling the curse of desires accomplished, and not thus smitten to the dust, are indeed—

> "Left in God's contempt apart,
> With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,"

but who are haunted men; who hear footsteps behind them; who, in their misery, feel the clutch of the demon on their hair; for whom "the Furies take their seats upon the midnight pillow." When Mercy has played her part in vain, then, always, "Vengeance leaps upon the stage." You will find that the law of punishment is the old *lex talionis*, "Life for life, eye for eye, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe;"—and think you that your vain and feeble hands can unforge that iron band wherewith, generation after generation, God has linked misery to all wilful and willing sin? Be not therefore high-minded, but fear!

7. But, in one last word, *How* shall we overcome? *how* shall we acquire our souls? My friends, there is no answer, but the old, old answer. A new answer, an original answer, could not but be a false one. The answer is best given in the pages of the old book, ever old and ever new, which you learnt at your mother's knee. You will find no nonsensical, no finicking, no sham answers there. The voice of God in His Holy Book directs you to no will-

worship, or paltry observances, but says, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." His word is, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." It is, "Slay at one blow" the impurity and the greed which "divide between them nearly the whole domain of selfishness and vice." It requires, believe me, constant prayer and resolute effort to keep the heart right. St. Paul, the "heaven-treader," as the Greek Church calls him, even St. Paul has to say, "This one thing I do—I press towards the mark of my high calling in Christ Jesus." Observe, God will help us, but He does not fight the battle for us. We must fight it for ourselves, each in the deep of our own hearts. "I know it is my shame," says the weak, wavering debauchee, in Othello, "but it is not in my virtue to amend it." "Virtue? a fig," answers the resolute, but clear-sighted villain, Iago. "'Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. So that, if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop, or weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason, to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions; but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings,

our unbitted lusts." Nay, we have something much more, much better than reason: we have the grace of God, we have the love of Christ, we have the intercession and the aid of that Holy Spirit, who jealously yearns over us, and makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Oh, remember if you feel that your case is that of the basely wavering, or even of the utterly defeated, none of you is so sunk in evil, while life lasts, as to be unredeemable. It is the weak who feel their weakness whom Christ will help. Go to Him as blind, go to Him as palsied, go to Him as a leper, go to Him even as a demoniac! If you seek Him He can, and will, restore your sight, strengthen your impotence, retouch your leprous soul into wholesome innocence. Oh, if you have gone astray, and are wandering still, cry to Him, whose ear is ever open to the cry of His returning prodigals; say to Him with full and believing hearts—

> "Thou know'st the way to bring me back,
> My fallen spirit to restore;
> O for Thy truth and mercy's sake
> Unloose, and bid me sin no more!
> The ruin of my life repair,
> And make my heart the home of prayer."

VIII

FAITH AND LOVE

VIII

FAITH AND LOVE

"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."—Ps. l. 23.

PURE religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, involves three conditions—a rule of faith; a law of conduct; and the union and result of both in a righteous and godly life.

(i.) All religion must rest upon a faith:—and, in the Apostles' Creed, the Universal Church of Christ summed up all that she regarded as fundamentally essential in her belief. The great basis of that Creed is that, though God is in heaven and man upon earth, yet God and man are not infinitely separated from each other. Unspeakably little as man is in himself—a worm, a thing of nought, the creature of a day, whose life is but as a dream, a shadow, a vapour, the flash of a weaver's shuttle, a passing ripple on the immeasurable sea—yet God is mindful of him, and exercises over him a tender Fatherhood. God has revealed Himself to him, so that he has become a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. This truth alone is rich in boundless consolation. Even man's vileness has not

utterly alienated God from him. It is not the will of Him, our Father, that one of His children should perish.

(ii.) But the revelation of God to man is nearer, more unspeakably tender, more divinely marvellous than even this. It is, that God, our Eternal Father, so loved the world that He sent His only Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. This is the blessed mystery of the Gospel, into which the very angels desire to look. It is the blessed mystery of the life and death of the Son of God on earth. It may give hope of redemption even to the most despairing soul, by the Divine message that, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

(iii.) And even this is not all. The relation between God and man is nearer, closer even than this. Were it not so, we might think that too exceptional a blessedness had been granted to those Apostles of the Lamb who saw, and heard, and their hands handled, the Word of Life. But what said our Lord? "It is expedient for you that I go away, for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." What! expedient for them that He, their Lord, their Master, the Light of their eyes, their only Friend, should be taken from them?

Yes! for He was only taken from them for a moment, to be restored to them tenfold for ever, by the absolute indwelling of His Holy Spirit. In the old dispensation the Temple of Jerusalem had been the earthly shrine of the Eternal God, where the Shechinah, the glory-cloud of His presence, shone between the outstretched wings of the golden Cherubim. In the Gospel days the Son of God Himself "spake of the Temple of His Body." In this, our final dispensation, the indwelling of God is in the heart of every true Christian man. "What! know ye not that your bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you, except"—and what an awful limitation is that!—"except ye be reprobates?" This gift of the Holy Spirit completes the essence of the Divine Revelation, and brings life and immortality to light. Hence there is a certain child-like piety in those old pictures in the monasteries of Mount Athos, in which, by a simple contrivance, if you stand on one side you see only the Saviour on the Cross; and on the other side only the Holy Heavenly Dove; and, if you stand in front, only the Ancient of Days, the Eternal Father. And these Three are One. It is the blessed revelation of the Trinity in Unity, and of the Unity in Trinity, and, if we apprehend rightly, our will shall

> "Roll onward like a wheel
> In even motion, by the love impelled,
> Which moves the sun in heaven, and all the stars."

2. And all this revelation is a revelation of simple love. "*Ubi amor*," said St. Augustine, "*ibi Trinitas*" —"Where love is, there is the Trinity." When the unhappy German poet, Heinrich Heine, was asked, by a little maid in the Harz Mountains, with a troubled countenance, "Do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?" he answered, "Yes, I believe in the Father, who made the beautiful earth, and sun, and moon, and stars, and men, and women; and in the well-beloved Son, who revealed to us what love is, and was of course crucified for it; and in the Holy Spirit, who breaks all the strongholds of oppression and sets the bondsmen free." Yes! the revelation of God in the Trinity is a revelation of God's love to man. "If," said Luther, "a man would paint a picture of God, it must be a picture which is wholly love, as if Divinity were nothing but a fire of love, filling heaven and earth. And again, if he would paint a picture of Love, it must be neither human nor angelic, but a picture of God Himself." And, as the beloved Archbishop Trench wrote in one of his beautiful poems—

> "I say to thee, do thou repeat,
> To the first man whom thou may'st meet
> In lane, highway, or open street,
> That he and we and all men, move
> Under a canopy of love,
> As broad as the blue sky above."

There, then, is the essential creed of Christianity.

3. But a creed alone does not constitute a religion. A creed is valueless, and worse than valueless, if it do not influence, and indeed *sway*, our conduct. The awful, divine belief of Christians becomes a mere verbal sham, a mere external nullity—no better than a painted mask over the grinning features of a skull—if it do not mould our character, and make us righteous and holy men. The nominal acceptance of a creed is one thing, righteousness is quite another. Well might the German philosopher say that two things overpowered his soul by their awful majesty: "the starry heavens above, and the moral law within." Well might he exclaim, "Oh Duty, thou sovereign power which holdest up the naked law in the heart of man, before which all passions are silent, however secretly they may rebel!" And well may the English poet sing of Duty, "that stern daughter of the voice of God"—

> "Stern monitress! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace,
> Nor see we anything so fair,
> As is the smile upon thy face:
> Flowers laugh before thee in their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads,
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are firm and strong."

Humanly invented religion is a tangled web of wearisome unrealities. What *God* requires is one thing, and one thing only, "truth in the inward

parts." This lesson is found on every page of the Old Testament and the New Testament, but we need only ask the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the King of Glory, your Lord and your God: what is His answer? given not once or twice, but many times, and in many forms. Is it not "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments"? Is it not, "Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven"? Is it not, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this—this—this—this is the Law and the Prophets"? Whatever be right, whatever be wrong, in this perplexing world—it has been said—whatever be true, whatever be false in this chaos of conflicting opinions, we cannot but be doing what is well-pleasing to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by softening our hard hearts, by subduing our rebellious wills, by mortifying our corrupt affections, by dashing to the ground our revolting conceitedness, by curbing our bitter tempers, by showing love towards God in humble, manly, and generous service to our brother men. Was not the old English poet right when he sang—

> "To pray to God continually;
> To learn to know Him rightfully;
> To honour God in Trinitie,
> The Trinitie in Unitie;
> The Father in His majestie,

The Son in His humanitie,
The Holy Ghost's benignitie:
To serve Him always holilie,
To praise Him always worthilie,
To love Him always steadfastlie,
To live here always vertuouslie;
To help the poor in misery,
To hope for Heaven's felicity,
To have Faith, Hope, and Charity,
To count this life but vanity"—

these surely are not only "points of Christianity," but infinitely more than any six points or sixty thousand points of petty ritualism:—they are the very secret of all salvation.

4. Faith, then, and love are the be-all and end-all of real, as apart from verbal and sham religion. Faith and love—faith and love, shown in the beauty and manliness of a genuinely noble life—constitute the difference between profession and sincerity. "In every nation"—says St. Peter! mark those words—"*in every nation*"—yea, even among the heathen—"he that feareth God, and doeth righteousness, is accepted of Him."

5. We have taken a glimpse of the beauty and splendour of the faith: we have seen the simplicity and majesty of Christian duty; but how are the two to be united? by what force shall we give reality to our belief by a holy and consistent course? We all know that it *can* be done, for all the saints of God have done it. We know that it can only be done by consciously giving our souls to our Saviour, by

wholly yielding ourselves to the influences of His Holy Spirit. Thus only can we utilise His appointed methods of our deliverance from sin and Satan—by determinate purpose, by earnest and ceaseless prayer, by resolute diligence in the service of God and man, by watchfulness over the evil thoughts of our hearts, by stern battle against the lusts of the flesh and the passions of the mind, by immediate decision to fly for refuge to the hope set before us. For "God never quenches a fire for a man who keeps secretly feeding it with oil;" and unless we are in earnest in resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil, we cannot be saved. But how? Not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by outward pretence, but by singleness of heart. Our religion must be real; it must bring forth the fruits of righteousness; it must make us men—good, true, real, manly men—or it is worthless. Christianity only sinks into decrepitude when men degrade it with self-interested usurpations and hollow falsities, and when they revolt every noble soul, by persistently trying to support it by the execrable forces of persecution, or subterranean slander. "A shipwreck," it has been said, "is none the less a shipwreck because it displays a showy flag." When Christ, by His authority, swept away the burdensome and futile traditions of a dead Pharisaism, He said, "Believe in Me;" "Come unto Me;" "Follow Me." The central force of all Christianity—the dew of its youth, the hidden spring of its enthusiasm, the mighty secret of its past success, the sure pledge of

its ultimate dominance—is personal devotion to Christ. "All other feelings," it has been said, "write their memories upon glass with a crayon; love writes upon crystal with a diamond. Of all the heart's powers, love alone is sovereign and immortal." "No abandoned boy in the city, no red man in the mountains, no negro in Africa, no cannibal in the Pacific, can finally resist its sweet solicitude. It undermines like a wave; it rends like an earthquake; it melts like a fire; it inspires like music; it binds like a chain; it cheers like a sunbeam." When any king or hero has succeeded in inspiring love, he has wielded a splendid power. But what human being has ever inspired one-thousandth part of the love which the Lord Jesus kindled like a living flame on the altar of millions of human hearts? The Magdalene wetted His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Children adored Him. The Levitic choir-boys shouted rapturous hosannas when He came. Zacchæus, at one word of gentleness from Him, repairs the wrongs of a lifetime. Shouting multitudes strewed His path with garments and with palms. Pilate—haughty and cruel Roman—is touched by His pale nobleness into awe and pity. He broke the heart of Peter into penitence by a single look. The dying robber, who sees Him only in His hour of shame, is melted to adoration by the pathos of His humiliated glory. St. Stephen, "under the heaped stones in anguish lying," sees Him, for one instant, in vision—and

radiance illuminates his angel countenance! St. Paul at one glimpse of Him, flings away the shams of a false Pharisaism, and the furies of a persecuting bigotry. At the talisman of the words, "For My sake," the martyrs exulted in their "death-defying utterance of truth," and not fearing—

> "To flesh the tiger's ravenous jaws, or feel
> The sportive fury of the fencer's steel"—

bore, as St. Ignatius said, "the burning of their flesh, the breaking of their limbs, the crunching of their whole bodies, if only they might attain to Christ." "*Christianos ad leones*," shouted the brutal mob, and the weakest boy in his quavering tones would still answer exultantly, "*Christianus sum!*" Amid their deadliest anguish they felt a joy "like the sweetness of night-flowers, born of darkness and tribulation," exulting that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. The very young, and the very old, and the youth in the heyday of his passions, the sober man of middle age, tender maidens, boors and slaves, philosophers and nobles, "all," says Cardinal Newman, "were equally ready for Christ's sake to defy the powers of darkness to do their worst."

6. Nor was this the mere hysteria of religion. It did not die with the martyrs; it has continued, to this day, the hidden spring of all self-sacrifice, and of all beauty in genuine Christianity. The love of Jesus burned amid, and purified, the immense errors

of mediæval superstition. It shines through the scholastic subtleties of St. Thomas Aquinas; it throbs in the mighty thunderings of Savonarola; it glows over the soft silent pictures of Fra Angelico; it rings through all our best hymns, whether written by Romanists like Faber, or Dissenters like Watts. That love of Christ visited the prisons with John Howard; it sought out the lost abandoned women with Elizabeth Fry; it taught the ragged children with John Pounds and Robert Raikes; it broke the fetters of the slave with Clarkson and Wilberforce; it preached the Gospel with Coleridge Patteson in Melanesia, and Livingstone in Africa; it toiled for temperance with Father Mathew; it went to die among the lepers with Father Damien; it wept with those that weep in the lifelong self-sacrifice of Lord Shaftesbury; it rescues waif children and street arabs with Dr. Barnardo; it labours in the lowest slums with the despised followers of William Booth. Bright as the blue sky, majestic as the starry heavens, strong as the everlasting hills, broad as the inviolate sea, it has been the source of all the heroism and all the saintliness of nineteen centuries. This is Christ's Real Presence. So has He fulfilled His promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." By humanly-invented doctrines, and dead mummeries, "we may change the flowing garments of His life into the grave-clothes of a dead Lord;" but, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." To all

who truly love Him, He is ever near. St. Francis of Assisi saw Him in the leper whom he kissed; and St. Elizabeth of Hungary in the sick whom she nursed; and St. Vincent de Paul in the galley-slaves whom he roused from grim despair; and Bishop Hannington in the savages for whom he died. But—

> "The love of Jesus, what it is
> None but His loved ones know."

You are not called upon to make the vast lifelong sacrifices of all that they had, which these men made so cheerfully, and received therefore their thousand-fold reward. But will you do nothing? or only the least you can? "There is," said Dean Milman, "but one throne of God in Christ on earth—the throne in the unseen heart of man. That throne may be the heart of the most wide-ruling sovereign, or the heart of the meanest of his subjects. It may be the heart of the loftiest pontiff, who, amid the most gorgeous ceremonies, is still secretly beating his breast with the cry of the publican. It may be that of the meekest missionary, laying down his life on some wild foreign shore. It may be that of a millionaire, making to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. It may be that of the old philosopher, seeking truth with intrepid faithfulness. It may be that of some ignorant peasant, telling his beads at the shrine of some questionable saint. But the heart of a bad man—even if he

pose as a Pharisee of the Pharisees—can never be the throne of Christ." My friends, let every one of us pray, for every one of us is at best but an unprofitable servant, that we may unite our creed and our duty;—that we may give reality to our creed, and energy to our moral life, by being faithful to the Lord of love;—that we may never disgrace His service by selfish torpor, by base self-importance, by self-deceiving vanity, by secret faithlessness. Let us, in deepest penitence, pray ever in the words of the old hymn for—

> "a heart to praise my God,
> A heart from sin set free,
> A heart that's sprinkled with the blood
> So freely shed for me.
>
> A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
> My dear Redeemer's throne,
> Where only Christ is heard to speak,
> Where Jesus reigns alone."

So shall we be saved from our enemies! So shall we not fear what man may say of us, or man can do unto us. So shall we acquire a calm, unshaken trust in God. So shall the Sun of Righteousness—risen upon us with healing in His wings—scatter the dark clouds and earth-born mists of our wrathful controversies, and faithless misgivings; or if, on earth, they cannot be wholly dissipated, yet, transfiguring the dark and cloudy sky, He shall paint them with purple and scarlet, and make them burn

with unimaginable gold. Let this, then, be our heart's desire, and our earnest prayer—

"Safe to the hidden house of Thine abiding,
Carry the weak knees, and the heart that faints,
Shield from the scorn, and cover from the chiding,
Give the world joy, but patience to the saints.

So with a ripple and a radiance through me
Rise and be manifest, O morning star!
Flow on my soul, thou Spirit, and renew me,
Fill with Thyself, and let the rest be far!"

IX

WHAT HAD BEEN SAID—AND WHAT CHRIST SAID

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"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time—but *I* say unto you."—MATT. v. 21.

SURELY if we are sincere—if we at all care to know what true religion means—we cannot study too deeply or too often the records of the Gospel, and especially that Sermon on the Mount, in which our Lord promulgated the fundamental laws of His own kingdom. That green hill beside the silver lake was His new Sinai. The old law had come to the children of Israel amid storm and fire and tempest, making them tremble with such terror that they cried to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and let not God speak with us." The new law, which was superseded by fulfilling the old, came for mankind under the balmy air to those rapt listeners as they sat among the lilies of the field. The voice of God Himself spake to them, in the accents of man, but more tenderly than any human speech. Of those rich words it often seems as if Christians did not even care to grasp the real significance. When men get to be passionately eager about the infinitesimal,

they are always tempted to minimise, or explain away, the essential. Many things now pressed upon us with wrath and clamour are not once mentioned, are not even distantly alluded to, in all the teaching of Christ. How then can it be pretended that they are of consummate importance? Let us beware, lest, amid rancorous defence of shibboleths and ceremonies, we close our eyes to eternal truths. The Pharisee thought himself immeasurably above the Publican; he wore much larger tassels, and made much longer prayers; but

> "One nearer to the altar trod;
> The other to the altar's God."

Christian systems have often lapsed into traditional superstitions, and Christian orthodoxy into anti-Christian pretences. The only orthodoxy for which God cares is the simple truth; and the one service which He requires is self-denying love—

> "He asks no taper-lights, or high surrounding,
> The priestly altar or the saintly grave;
> No dolorous chant, nor organ-music sounding,
> Nor incense clouding up the twilight nave.
>
> O brother-man, fold to thy heart thy brother!
> Where Pity dwells the peace of God is there;
> To worship rightly is to love each other,
> Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer."

Hence, throughout His whole ministry Christ warned His hearers far less against irreligion than

against religionism; against the confusion of religion with the nullities of an empty externalism; against the corruption of true religion by its self-deceiving substitutes.

1. What were the circumstances amid which the Saviour spoke? The people of His day boasted of a religion venerable with the prescription of two thousand years. They had a Temple as gorgeous as it could be made by the wealthiest of kings. They had an immense array of Priests and Levites. Their High-Priests wore gorgeous vestments; their sacrifices were countless; their ceremonies most scrupulously elaborate. The Rabbis and Pharisees posed as the oracular interpreters of Divine mysteries, and claimed to hold the very keys of the kingdom of heaven. They stood praying in the synagogues, and at the corners of the streets. In the broadest of phylacteries, and the bluest of fringes, fasting twice in the week, paying tithes of mint, anise, and cumin, these monopolists of sanctimoniousness were (Christ told them) so filled with subtle hypocrisy as scarcely to realise what hypocrites they were. Forgers of fetters for all who were weak enough to become their slaves—in the "ghastly smooth life, dead at heart," of a self-satisfied formalism—they spent their lives in

> "Dropping buckets into empty wells,
> And growing old in drawing nothing out."

Absorbed in the idolatry of the symbol, they had

lost all hold on the reality. Intensely particular about the correct way of burning "the two kidneys and the fat," they were unanimous in villainously murdering the Lord of Glory. They exalted paltry scrupulosities; He cared only for the eternal moral law. They were rigid about ablutions of cups and platters; He demanded only a clean heart and a right spirit. Blind leaders of the blind, they deemed themselves superlatively righteous, and, all the while, the dark horizon was growing more and more lurid with the menace of lightnings which would burn and shatter their whole paraphernalia of Levitical nullities into the indistinguishable dust! Such—only in many particulars far more severe—is the picture drawn by Him whom we profess to worship as God Himself, of those religionists of His day, of whom alone He spoke in language of sternest reprobation, and on whom He pronounced His seven times repeated "Woe!"

And how did the religious world of Christ's day receive these truths, at once so new and so old? They received them with the rage which is always more unscrupulous in religious partisans than even in the world. "Is not this the Carpenter?" they sneered. "Which of the rulers or of the Pharisees have believed in Him?" "He deceiveth the people." "He is a Samaritan." "He hath a devil." "Not this man, but Barabbas." And at last their habitual malice, lying, and slandering ended in furious violence, in the cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

That was how a Church, which fancied itself pre-eminently pure, treated the Lord of Glory! And if you look at history, whether you take Montanus in the third century; or Vigilantius in the fourth; or Wycliffe in the fourteenth; or Huss in the fifteenth; or Luther in the sixteenth; or Spener in the seventeenth; or Zinzendorf in the eighteenth; or Wesley, and Whitfield, and Maurice, and Stanley, and many of the best and truest men in the nineteenth, you will see that it has never been otherwise; and that (as Christ Himself forewarned us), hollow unreality has been the deadliest foe of true religion. Is there no warning in facts like these? Is it a mere incident of no significance that they who crucified the Son of God were not the harlots and the Publicans, but the Pharisees and Priests?

There is at least this warning, that amid the diffusiveness of corrupting falsities, and the thousandfold reverberation of empty echoes, men constantly substitute for the Gospel of Christ an entirely different Gospel, because they love their own traditions better than the truth, and their own party better than the Church, and themselves best of all. Nor can this ever be checked except by the faithfulness which, amid whatever gross calumnies and persecutions, would rather die than lie. So it has been again and again. The useless salt looks like salt, only it has become impotent and unsound. It glitters, and claims to be the same salt still, but it can no longer avert corruption, because it has lost

the imperishable permanence of its invisible essence. There is no way to escape the danger but to bring alike our personal and our party religion, in faith, in humility, by prayer, to the searching test of "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus;" to the plain, unencumbered, incorrupt, unsophisticated Gospel, as it was taught by Christ Himself. He who is content with the arrogant and tyrannic judgments of man's brief day, will soon find himself in an ever-deepening quagmire of falsities. We must learn to recognise but one rule—what Christ said: and by what Christ said, we mean what Christ demonstrably *meant*, not the reiterated quotation of isolated phrases misinterpreted and perverted into a sense they never bore. And by what Christ said, we mean not only what He said two thousand years ago in the plain of Gennesareth, but what He is now daily saying to us by His Holy Spirit. No article of the Creed is more ignored in erring Churches than that most essential one, "I believe in the Holy Ghost"—in the living, present, abiding Teacher, who, now and always, will speak to us immediately, directly, face to face, with no need for feeble, ignorant, and erring men to thrust their nothingness between our souls and the Living God. In history, in conscience, in personal experience, in advancing enlightenment, in the revolt of the Divine impulse of His freedom against the would-be autocrats over human souls, He is speaking, and will, even to the end of the world, speak to all who sincerely and humbly listen

for His voice. He will correct the aberrations of men, by Him who was the Light of the World—by that Light of God which is ever shining in the darkness, though the darkness apprehendeth it not.

(i.) Now, among many other lessons I see three most needful ones in these words of Christ. I see first the law of *progressiveness.* An unprogressive Church is a dying Church; a retrogressive Church is a dead Church. Were I asked, what is the worst of dangers to any Church? I should answer, "Stagnant traditions, rotting in a dead theology;" and the substitution of eye-service and lip-profession for the devotion of noble work. The reference of everything to archæology, and precedent, and human authority is one invariable sign of a decadent religion. He promised to all His children that Holy Spirit, of whom He said, "He shall teach you all things." The essence of the Pharisaism which Christ denounced was abject second-handness. What the great Synagogue said; what Hillel said; what Shammai said; what Priests and Pharisees said;—Christ taught them that not even what Moses said was final, still less the inferences with which it had become worm-eaten.

(ii.) And besides the duty of progress, I see in Christ's words the sovereign requirement of *simplicity* and absolute sincerity; of that truth in the inward parts without which we shall never understand wisdom secretly. A religion which is a thing of form, not a thing of the heart, is worse than

worthless. We may attend full services twice every day, yet never offer one heartfelt prayer. We may go to daily communion, yet be inexpressibly contemptible, devoid of a single element of generosity or honour. We may bow our heads like a bulrush, and practise as many prostrations as St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar, as though God were some petty Indian idol, to be appeased by gestures and manipulations, and yet not have in our hearts one atom of the holy reverence which blossoms in righteousness and love. Ah! what sort of questions do we think that God will put to us at the sacred, solemn bar? Will names and rites and ceremonies avail us if our hearts be full of petty malignities, and our lives rotten with artificial lies? Will such mechanical amulets restore a soul which is ignobly white with the leprosy of essential meanness? If the kingdom of God be not within us, we have no share in it. God will not ask us to what party we belonged, or whether we believed in Transubstantiation, or accepted the pretensions of Popes or priests, or bowed to what we called "altars,"—but what we *are*, and how we speak, and how we think, and how we live.

(iii.) Progressiveness, then, and sincerity; and once again I see in Christ's words the law of *spirituality*. The letter killeth; it is only the Spirit which giveth life. The Jews of Christ's day had turned the Old Testament into a fetish; they counted its letters. They could tell you how often the letter *e* occurred in it; and that there were six *a's* in the first verse

of it, and six *a's* in the last; and only two verses which began with the letter *s*;—yet so far from making it to their souls a word of life, they only used it to thrust its scraps of misinterpreted texts, and shreds of perverted metaphor, between their souls and God. Let us, too, take heed lest we turn the Scriptures, and our own wilful distortions of them, from a transparent medium, through which may stream to us the light of heaven, into an opaque barrier, or even an enclosing prison-wall, between our souls and the love of God.

My friends, if we think we do not need these warnings we deceive ourselves. If such warnings were needless we should not find the Gospels and the whole New Testament full of them. There never was an age, not even that of the Apostles, in which Christians did not need to be exhorted to progressiveness, to sincerity, to spirituality. "Let us," said the Apostle, "advance unto perfection"—that is progressiveness. "Desire the pure unadulterated milk of the Word"—that is sincerity. "The flesh profiteth nothing; the words which I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life"—that is spirituality. None of Christ's words are otiose; all of them have a plain, historical, ascertainable meaning. Go, then, to the Word and to the Testimony for yourselves. Study the Sermon on the Mount, and Christ's many exposures and denunciations of Pharisaism for yourselves. If I have misrepresented one jot or one tittle of their meaning, in God's name

reject what I say; but if you can easily test for yourselves that what I say is certain, then take earnest heed to yourselves lest the religion by which you profess to live be but as a whited sepulchre—a raging hatred, a self-deceiving vanity, an unprogressive stagnation, an unspiritual falsity, a hollow and insincere routine.

History, alas! abounds in proofs that Churches may suffer themselves to be absorbed, sometimes in bitter persecution and slanderous attacks on their noblest sons—sometimes in swarms of functional pettinesses—while they utterly ignore their true and sublimest duties. They have constantly said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," while they are poor, and blind, and naked, and wretched, and miserable. The whole object of my sermon is this,—to impress on my own heart, and on the hearts of all who hear me, these two truths, as at once the safety and the test of all faithful Churches: the one, that they should neither add to, nor take away from, the plain teaching of Christ; the other, that they should abound in works of love and mercy to all men; seeing that "he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Let us beware; let us examine ourselves lest we fail to meet these tests. And is there nothing to warn us in contemporary facts? Take but one illustration, when I might give many.

2. If there was one man who faithfully served God in his generation in our days, that man was

Antony Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury. Had he not lived and laboured, the age would have been a different age. On which side ought the Church—ought the clergy—ought the religious feeling of the day to have been on the great philanthropic questions—the Factory Bill, the Ten Hours Bill, the Ragged School movement, the many efforts of justice and mercy—which occupied the toils of his lifelong self-denial? Alas! on which side were they? We can read in his Biography with what contempt and hatred that great and good man was assailed by society, by the press, by the world. The world acted after its kind. "The press and society," he said, "teem with vituperation and hatred, with venom and violence. Bigot! fool! fanatic! are the mildest terms." But how was he treated by those who professed and called themselves Christians? "To whom," he asks, "should I have naturally looked for the chief aid? Why, undoubtedly, to the clergy! But it was quite the reverse. From them, from the sixteen thousand ordained ministers of Christ's Gospel, I have received no help, or next to none." Alas! it is only too possible for Churches to be in the midst of what they describe as a great effort or much-belauded revival; to be in a state of chronic controversy about shibboleths and rubrics, and yet to be deplorably dead to that which is the most glorious work of every true Church, and should be its loftiest ambition—the moral uplifting, the social amelioration of the world. While Lord

Shaftesbury was left to toil without the Church's aid, the air was ringing with so-called religious controversies about definitions of doctrine, and infinitesimals of ritual—the "Gorham Controversy;" the "Essays and Reviews Controversy;" "Colenso Controversies;" "Tractarian Controversies:"—and all the while the best reformer, the most self-denying philanthropist of his day—whose achievements of social compassion are the brightest jewel in the reign of Queen Victoria; who did more, perhaps, than nine-tenths of the clergy to draw together the rich and the poor—was writing this terrible sentence: "I find support from infidels, opposition or coldness from religionists." Judge for yourselves as to the significance of this broad and almost contemporary fact—only one of many such which stand out on the pages of all Christian history—whether it may not be possible for a Church to claim to be ever so orthodox, and ever so "catholic," and yet to fail egregiously in her most solemn and most essential duties. And when I speak of "the Church," do you think I mean only the clergy? Is the Church a mere sacerdotal caste, in which you have no concern, and for whose work you have no responsibility? Ten thousand times no! You—you, unless you abnegate your most sacred duty and privilege—you, you are the Church; Christ has made you all His kingdom and His Priests. It is your fault no less than ours—nay, yours even more than ours, seeing you are a hundredfold the more in number—if we

lose the proportion of Christ's teaching, or shift the perspective of His requirements. Without Christ the Church is nothing, and less than nothing;—a pretentious shadow, a barren cumberer of the ground. Are you Christ's, not in name, but in deed and in truth? And how can you show that you are Christ's? Is it by loud demonstrations in the supposed cause of religion, and bitter contempt of those who hold your views to be fundamentally wrong? If that be the main form your "churchmanship" takes, it is earthly and devilish.

> "A man may cry 'Church, church,' at every word,
> With no more piety than other people;
> A daw's not counted a religious bird,
> Because it keeps caw-cawing from the steeple."

What God requires is active self-sacrifice, not barren formulæ and petty rites. What this or that man, or party, or Church newspaper says is nothing; but the words which He spake unto us they are spirit and they are life—

> "For He whom Jesus loved, hath truly spoken;
> The holier worship which He deigns to bless
> Restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,
> And feeds the widow and the fatherless!"

Or, as the same holy poet writes again—

> "Not Thine, the bigot's partial plea,
> Nor Thine, the zealot's ban;
> Thou well canst spare a love of Thee,
> Which ends in hate of man.

Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
  What may Thy service be?
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
  But simply following Thee.

Thy litanies sweet offices
  Of love and gratitude;
Thy sacramental liturgies
  The joy of doing good."

To the Word and to the Testimony, and see for yourselves whether this be not so. What did Christ say? He said, "Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." No Church will escape the mighty winnowing fan of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, if it have only a name to live while it is dead. A Church may boast itself ever so orthodox, and ever so "catholic," but it will have to face a searching judgment if it leaves the essential work for Christ in this world undone. He shall say to it, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me," and "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." And oh, if we would but rise to the height of this great argument, how vast, alas! is the work which is still to do, and how very few of us are otherwise than grossly backward in doing it! An important book, called "This Wonderful Century," has just been written by one

of the most eminent of our living men of science; and in it he says, "I have adduced a body of evidence, showing that, accompanying our enormous increase of wealth, there has been a corresponding increase of poverty, of insanity, of suicide, and probably even of crime, together with other indications of moral and physical deterioration." He shows, too, from statistics, that, during the last twenty years, the deaths of men from intemperance have increased 58 per cent., and of women more than 100 per cent.; and that the evil is rapidly increasing, and that, owing to the growth of our great cities, fostering the growth of a criminal population, there has been an increase of want going on side by side with our increase of wealth; and that, in the words of so clear-eyed and impartial an observer as Professor Huxley, "our present social order makes for evil and not for good." Among these colossal evils poets, and philosophers, and social reformers, and men of science, have spoken. Will it not be an unspeakable condemnation for the Church of Christ if she is silent? if, absorbed in disputes about all sorts of insignificant questions, she leaves her best laymen, and her truest saints, to work single-handed, neglected, and vilified, and takes no mighty, no essential part in that deliverance, in that amelioration of the world, which it is our bounden duty as a Church to undertake for His sake who said, "I came that men may have life, and may have it more abundantly"?

Let me leave with you this weighty, this awful consideration. It would have been easy for me if I deigned to seek the praise of men—whereas I know their dispraise to be often the highest possible praise—it would have been easy for me to speak to you smooth things, and prophesy deceits, to tickle your ears with soft inanities, and bid us all be proud of our prosperity and our churchliness. I prefer to leave you to judge of things that are, and to judge them as they are, before the eyes of Him who will be deceived by no mocks or shams, but whose eyes, "ten thousand times brighter than the sun," burn into the deepest secrets of our self-flattering and self-deceiving hearts.

X

OUR RELATION TO THE PRESENT

X

OUR RELATION TO THE PRESENT

"Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."—Heb. iv. 7.

I spoke to you last from this place about the manner in which we should regard our yesterdays, and tried to show you the danger and misery of dwelling unwisely on the past, since the past is irrevocable. I pointed out the evils of unavailing regrets for lost blessings, and unavailing remorse for past sins. But our life, our true life, the only life we can count upon, is now. Let us ~~then~~ try to see how God would have us regard the present; let us endeavour to realise what is the duty, what the conditions, what the privileges of each passing day.

1. First, let us remember always that each day has its own possible blessings. A poet has imagined the days of his life passing by him, like solemn virgins, in long and silent procession. He sits in his garden and sees them pass; their faces are veiled, their manner is emotionless. In their hands they bear caskets full of various offerings—some trivial, some of inestimable value. Among those gifts, on

the one hand, are stars and priceless diadems, on the other Dead Sea fruits and fading blossoms. He overlooks his morning wishes in idle and neglectful mood. Forgetting that time which is lost can never be regained, he lets the silent days speed past him. Hastily, at evening, when they have almost disappeared, he snatches their slightest gifts—some crude apple, or withering rose; and, as they turn away in silence, too late, under the awful shadow of their veils, he sees the look of scorn. Yes! every day has its own boons for us, if we will but rightly use them; and most of all these Sabbath-days, which might be to us as beacon-lights in the waste of waters, a source of illumination amid the darkness, of safety amid the storm. And as that eloquent monitor the sun-dial at Lincoln's Inn warns us—*Pereunt et imputantur*—they pass away and are reckoned to our charge.

2. But besides its gifts, ~~it is a solemn thought, and one full of reproach to a tender conscience, that~~ each day has also its opportunities. From sunrise to sunset God is giving us opportunities, which might be to us prolific in blessings. "*Ex hoc momento*," says another sun-dial, "*pendet eternitas*"—"From this moment hangs eternity." When the Roman Emperor, at a day's close, used to exclaim with a sigh, "~~*Amici, perdidi diem!*~~" he meant that, on that day, he had missed the opportunity of conferring a kindness on any one. Well, in that one waste of opportunities—the neglect to confer kind-

"Friends, I have lost a da

nesses—what havoc do we all make of our days! I speak not of those deplorable men and women—and alas! their name is legion—whose whole lives are filled with gossip, slander, spite, envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness; who are always trying to pinch out any little buzz of another's fame or success, which annoys their envy, or to sting those who live above the level of their littleness and ignorance. Our noble rule should be—

> "Do all the good you can,
> By all the means you can,
> In all the ways you can,
> In all the places you can,
> At all the times you can,
> To all the people you can,
> As long as ever you can;"

whereas myriads seem to adopt the rule, Do all the harm you can, by all the spite, conceit, and envy you can, in every way you can, to as many as ever you can. We are not all quite so fallen and despicable as this, but how many of us, day after day, lose precious chances of doing little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness, which would cost us nothing, and yet would tend to make the happy happier, and the sorrowful less sad! We see men and women staggering along under heavy burdens, and we do not even stretch out a finger to help them! The word spoken in due season, how good is it! yet how often is it left unspoken! And how often, by

selfishness, temper, egotism, vanity, or by mere carelessness—

> "For evil is wrought by want of thought
> As well as by want of heart"—

we miss that blessing of doing services which the very angels might envy us, were it only by giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name to one of His little ones! But it is not only by daily neglect of the thousand little kindnesses and courtesies, which would sweeten life, that we waste our days. We squander them, pervert them, turn them into fruitful elements of curse hereafter. "Time is money," says the worldly man of business. Ay, but that is the least thing it is, for time is also in some sense eternity.

> "See here is dawning
> Another blue day!
> Say wilt thou let it
> Slip useless away?
>
> Out of eternity
> This day was born;
> Into eternity
> At night will return.
>
> Behold it aforetime
> No eye ever did;
> So soon it for ever
> From all eyes is hid.
>
> See here is dawning
> Another blue day!
> Think, wilt thou let it
> Slip useless away?"

3. Again, every day has its own sources of pure, holy happiness. Alas! what bad economists of happiness we are! How little we use the bounteous stores which God provides for us!

"More servants wait on man than he'll take notice of." How many walk through the world with eyes closed to all its matchless beauty, though every day reveals some gleam of sunrise or of sunset, the pageantry of clouds, the blue canopy of heaven, the budding of the trees in spring, the gleam of light upon the waters, the "unfolding of the flower, and the falling of the dew, and the sleep of the green fields in the sunshine." Again, what melodies and glories are there for us in music and in art, which echo our unspoken emotions, and reflect the outward splendours of creation in human thought. What blessings in the happy sanctities of home, and the peace on the faces of those whom we love! How possible it is for us at any moment to escape from sordid cares and mean surroundings, into "unimaginable realms of faerie," in those great books which, at the turning of a leaf, may free us from the society of the ignoble and the despicable, and admit us into the immortal choirs of poets "with their garlands and singing robes about them," and the high companionship of holy and mighty souls. It is man's own fault if he is such a pauper of happiness as he often represents himself to be. There are very few to whom God wholly denies the grassy field of contentment, the simple wild flowers of innocent

happiness, the limpid spring of the river of the water of life, which flows under the trees of the Paradise of God. There may be wisdom in the rule, "*Carpe diem*," pluck the innocent unfolding blossom of each passing day, instead of spoiling it by idle repinings, or discontented anticipations.

> "'Live while you live,' the epicure would say,
> And seize the pleasures of the present day;
> 'Live while you live,' the sacred preacher cries,
> And give to God each moment as it flies.
> Lord, in my view may both united be—
> I live to pleasure, while I live to Thee."

4. Again, ~~besides its gifts, besides its opportunities~~, every day, ~~thank God,~~ has its most precious and most fruitful duties. Riches may fail, fame may vanish, friends may die, but "this time world flickers on the dim still mirror of eternity, and man's little life has duties which alone are great." This alone should suffice to rob life of half its perplexities. Are we unhappy? Then, instead of brooding over our sorrows, let us find in duty the surest of consolations, and "take up our burden of life again," not saying even, "It might have been." Are we happy? The surest way of deepening our happiness, and making it more secure, is to go on in duty's path. "Do the next thing." "Life is the verb to do." If we cannot build on the foundations of the past, then let us rebuild amid its ruins. Nothing is more pernicious than idle day-dreams in the place of

strenuous endeavours. In the beautiful Greek idyll the poor old weary fisherman dreams that he has caught a fish of pure gold, and that he has sworn to sell it, and never to dip line in the stormy waves again. On awaking he is troubled as to what he ought to do about the oath taken in his dream. "Cheer up," says his old comrade, "you didn't take the oath, for you see you haven't caught the fish of gold. Dreams are nothing. But if, in sober waking, you will toil and watch, some good thing may perhaps come of your vision. Look out for the real fish, lest you die of hunger and your golden dreams." Is not the moral of the Greek idyll to be found even in Scripture? When the frightened children of Israel murmured to Moses at the sight of the pursuing Egyptians, the Lord said unto Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." When, in the forty days after the Resurrection, the disciples were awaiting the promise of Pentecost, Simon Peter said to the Apostles, "I go a fishing." "We also go with thee," they replied; and though all that night they caught nothing, yet, in the dim grey dawn, there stood a figure on the shore, and said, "Children, cast your net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They obeyed, and when the great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three, filled the swaying net with their rush and gleam, John said unto Peter, "It is the Lord." They had found Him more readily in faithful work than in anxious waiting. And so shall we.

The shepherds, watching their sheep, hear the angels sing of Him under the starlight in the fields of Bethlehem; and the toilers on the lake see Him, and hear His voice, as the morning glimmers over the misty strand.

> "Trust no future, howe'er pleasant,
> Let the dead past bury its dead;
> Act, act in the living Present,
> Heart within, and God o'erhead.'

5. And, my friends, among its duties, each day has its one supreme duty: the duty of repentance if we are living lives of sin; the duty of getting nearer to God, if, by Christ's mercy, we have already seen and tasted that the Lord is gracious. Ah! if this duty be neglected, no other will avail. The disciples of an ancient Rabbi once asked him the foolish question, "When ought a man to repent?" To which he gave the designedly foolish answer, "Let him repent one day before his death." "But how can that be, Rabbi?" they asked. "How shall a man know when he is about to die?" "Well, then," said the Rabbi, "let no day pass without repentance, for any day may be the day before his death." It was a lesson which the Jews had well learnt from the Scriptures, which ever teach us that now is the appointed time; now is the day of salvation. Another story in the Talmud illustrates the same truth. A Rabbi met the Prophet Elijah, and asked him, "When will Messiah come?" "Go and ask

the Messiah Himself," answered Elijah. "But where shall I find Him?" "You will find Him seated on the steps among the beggars and the lepers in Rome," answered the Prophet. The Rabbi went, and finding the Messiah amid the stricken and afflicted, asked "When He would come?" "To-day," answered the Messiah. The Rabbi returned to tell Elijah, and to prepare for the great advent. But meanwhile the sun set and the Messiah had not come. "How is this?" exclaimed the astonished Rabbi. "Did He say to me that which is not true?" "Nay," answered the great Forerunner; "He meant, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." In any case, brethren, each day of our lives is one day nearer death. "Every day is but a dazzling spoke in the swift wheel of the revolving week," as, in ceaseless speed, the weeks flash into the months, and the months into the years, and the chariot of the years rolls on in "the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity." How very few days may be left to us, and how short is even a long life! Supposing that at this moment some voice out of the unknown thrilled into our heart the message, "You shall die this year," would not every day seem precious then? Well, I may say with certainty to more than one of you who hear me, and who little think that the warning is to you, "You will die this year." But such a message would waken no tremor in the heart—would not quicken by one beat the pulse—of a holy man. Are not the last days of a criminal

under sentence of death of awful importance to him? Ah, brethren, are none of us here criminals under sentence of death, and perhaps with but a short reprieve? "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the number of my days, that I may be certified how long I have to live." Ah! *that* I cannot know—

> "Here in the body pent
> Afar from Him I roam;
> Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
> A day's march nearer home."

6. If, then, ~~as we have seen,~~ every day has its *gifts*, which we often reject; every day its *opportunities* of well-doing, which we often waste; ~~every day its *sources of happiness*, which we thanklessly ignore;~~ every day its *duties*, which, at the best, we so imperfectly accomplish; ~~every day its *one supreme duty*, which, if left unaccomplished, means our utter ruin,~~—ought we not, most earnestly, to thank God that, also, every day has its *helps*. There is an infinitude of help always at hand. God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. He will not leave us nor forsake us. He who gave His own Son for our sins, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Is not Conscience His voice within us? Has He not given us His Holy Spirit? Has He not provided for us in prayer a golden ladder between earth and heaven, on whose rounds ascend and descend the angels of

God? The great bell of Westminster booms forth the hours to the tune—

> "Lord, through this hour
> Be Thou my guide;
> So through Thy power
> No foot shall slide!"

Is not that an admirable prayer for us from hour to hour? and, oh, how potent—were it uttered from the depth of the heart—might be the daily petition, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin!" Again, He limiteth a certain time, saying, in David, "To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts." The present only is ours; to-morrow is God's; yesterday is God's—

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Runs in this petty pace from day to day,
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The road to dusty death."

When I was an undergraduate at Cambridge one of my companions, who afterwards grew up to be one of the foremost leaders of science in this century, wrote in a book of mine these memorable words, "He that would enjoy life, and act with freedom, must have the work of the day constantly before his eyes. Not yesterday's work, lest he fall into despair; not to-morrow's, lest he become a visionary; not that which ends with the day, which is a worldly work; nor yet that only which remains to eternity, for by it he cannot shape his actions. Happy is the man who can recognise in the work of to-day a

connected portion of the work of life, and an embodiment of the work of eternity. The foundations of his confidence are unchangeable, for he has been made a partaker of Infinity. He strenuously works out his daily enterprises, because the present, and the present only, is given him for a possession. Thus ought man to be an impersonation of the Divine progress of nature, and to show forth the union of the finite with the Infinite, not slighting his temporal existence, remembering that in it only is individual action possible; yet never shutting out from his view that which is eternal, knowing that Time is a mystery which man cannot understand until eternal truth enlighten it."

Ah! my friends, how infinitely brighter, more useful, more noble, our life might be if we would only bear in mind that He, the Son of God, who bore its burden for us, is ever with us, and may be in us! He is ever with all who seek Him; He dwells in the hearts of all who love Him. It is our own fault if we reject that eternal Friend who is ever ready to brighten our society, to bless our solitude, to dispel our sorrows, to lighten our despair, to strengthen our efforts, to irradiate our darkness, to enable us to live lives so pure, so kind, so noble, that for us earth would be but "the shadow of heaven;" and happy yesterdays and confident to-morrows would crown our faithfulness from day to day, while Christ Himself, our Fair Shepherd, led and guided us into His everlasting rest!

XI

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT"

XI

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT"

"Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called."—1 Tim. vi. 12.

How is any man to save his life from shame and self-destruction; to tread upon the lion and the adder, to crush the young lion and the basilisk beneath his feet? How, amid the perils and strong fascination of bodily desires, may a youth escape from growing up to be a sluggard, or a glutton, or a drunkard, or a slanderer, or an unclean person who is an idolater? Oh, it is hard—hard, and not so easy as some think—to be good and not bad:—and how is it to be accomplished? It is the question of all questions in human life. For the one important difference which separates men from men is not whether they are rich or poor, not whether they are noble or obscure, not whether they are of high or of low position, not whether they are brilliant or ungifted—but essentially, and eternally, whether they are good or bad. How many among you who hear me—sincerely, passionately, above all things—desire to be, in God's sense, good men? And, if you desire it, how is it to be accomplished? Let me try to tell you.

1. First, *we must start with the absolute conviction that it can be done.* That it might be possible, the Son of God lived and died. Seek Him with your whole heart, and you shall be saved. There are some who openly, and many who secretly, indulge in the blasphemous fatalism of making God responsible for their vileness. It is a fraud of the devil. Let no man, when he is tempted, say, "I am tempted of God," for God tempteth not any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed. "God made the living soul; the ruined creature is the work of man." Do we not find the proof of this in that multitude of the redeemed, clad in white robes, and with palms in their hands, whom we have just been commemorating on All Saints' Day?

There were some of them, no doubt, "of whom the grace of God took early hold, and reason and religion ran together, like warp and woof, to weave the web of a pure and holy life;" but there were others who, for long years, had to stand in perpetual sentry, to struggle in agonising warfare against their lower selves. Take such a saint as Augustine of Hippo. He was a petulant, wayward boy; he was a soft, impure, and dissolute youth; vain, corrupt, selfish, deceitful—a sore anxiety to that tender saint his mother, St. Monica. But at last, as with a flash of God's own lightning, there had been burnt into his heart the text: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in

strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Thenceforth Augustine was a changed man. He bathed himself in the laver of regeneration. He was cleansed, justified, sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. He knew from that hour the joy of repentance, the blessing of forgiveness. And He who thus saved Augustine—He who saved Israel from the perils of the wilderness, and Jonah from the tempestuous deep, and Joseph from the well and the prison and from the far deadlier snare of sensual temptation, and Daniel from the lions' den, and the Three Children from the burning fiery furnace, and Paul from the meanness of self-deceiving religionism and the sham infallibility of persecuting bigotry,—is His arm shortened, that it cannot save? Is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear? Oh, begin, I entreat you, with the unshaken, unshakable conviction, that you too can become pure and holy; that you too can wash white the soiled robe of your life in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; that, if you do not harden your hearts, He can and will save you, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his sin and be saved.

First, then, *believe, be sure, that you can win the victory.* But again, how?

From age to age the Books of God have furnished us with the answer to that question. "Wherewithal shall the young man cleanse his way?" asked

the Psalmist, three thousand years ago; and he answered, "even by taking heed thereto, according to Thy Word." But no victory is possible without will, determination, resolve, *the absolute, unwavering purpose* by God's grace to subdue our evil passions. On this all depends. You must give yourself up, body and soul, to the care of your Saviour Christ, and to the influences of His Holy Spirit. Do not deceive yourselves with the silly notion that *your* temptations are abnormal and exceptional, that it is more difficult for you than for others to escape from the pit of destruction. If, indeed, we are making no resolve, if we are passively selling ourselves to do evil, if we are vilely content that Satan and not God should rule over us—then, humanly speaking, we are rendering repentance impossible, and there remaineth for us nothing but life shamed and ruined here, and a fearful looking-for of wrath to come. But if, in the strength which Christ's Holy Spirit will give to all who seek Him, we learn to say "*I will*," then He can keep us safe from our enemies for evermore.

2. But, next, you can *never make and keep this vow*—this will, this determination, to conquer sin—*without God's help.* We are not sufficient of ourselves to do anything as of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God. The victory, therefore, over ourselves cannot be won without prayer. Either praying—by which I mean earnest, agonising, heartfelt prayer—will make us leave off sinning, or sinning will make us leave off praying. Real, passionate prayer

—prayer like that of Jacob's wrestling with God by the midnight stream, when he rose from being Jacob the mean supplanter, to be Israel the prince with God—is inconsistent with any continued indulgence in any known sin, secret or open. You must not merely *say* your prayers in a dead and half-sleepy routine. You must *pray*. Will every young man who hears me try to offer such a prayer this very night by the altar of his own bedside? For

> "Prayers are the only giants which assail
> The Throne of Heaven, and in the end prevail."

3. Then, thirdly, if you would conquer your sin, *you must eschew idleness*, you must have no wasted hours, which are as the house empty, and swept, and garnished, into which enter seven devils. Besides your regular occupation, by which you earn your daily bread, you must so fill your lives with reading, with study, with usefulness, with noble energy, and high service to your fellow-men, as to leave no room for the assaults of temptation. You must empty by filling—empty your minds of evil by filling them with good. Idleness, loafing, lounging, day-dreaming, betting and gambling; frittering away your time on the absurd frivolities of trivial, accidental tittle-tattle; incessant dabbling in "the shoreless lakes of human ditch-water" and "the stagnant goose-ponds of idle gossip;" incessant groping amid the verminiferous malignities of envy, scandal, and spite; all shameful talking and jesting which are

not convenient—are fatal to lives of wholesome purity. The devil tempts even busy men—but at a disadvantage; the idle man tempts the devil. You must be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

4. A fourth most indispensable rule is *watchfulness over the thoughts of your heart*, without which they will be only evil continually. The *heart* must be kept pure, or the life will certainly be impure. Do not deceive yourself with the pretence that thoughts are nothing; they are as real as deeds to those eyes ten thousand times brighter than the sun, which burn into the inmost secrets of our being. "Out of the heart," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "proceed evil thoughts;" and then, as though the very flood-gates had been opened, and the destroying waves let loose, the evil thought develops into the evil wish, the evil purpose, the evil deed, the evil repetition, the evil habit, the seemingly evil necessity. Sin, which at first looked abhorrent, becomes first easy, then attractive, then pleasant, then habitual and defiant; then detestable once more, but a remorseless tyrant; and then the man becomes the reprobate, as his evil thoughts take form in murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, deceit, covetousness, an evil eye—all these things come from within, and these defile the man. Never think lightly of an evil thought. It is the

> "little pitted speck in garnered fruit,
> That, rotting inward, slowly moulders all."

Unless you strive with all your sincerity to keep your *thoughts* pure, your whole life will grow corrupt. The evil thought, like the basilisk, will fix its deadly eye upon you, and bring you under the sway of its frightful fascination. Will you, then, accept this most practical piece of advice? Whenever you find that an evil thought is trying to engross and sway your soul, whether by slow serpentine approaches, or "terrible and with a tiger's leaps"; whenever you find yourself slipping into evil thoughts, rolling them like a sweet morsel under the tongue, indulging them, becoming more than half guilty in them—then fly, from yourself to God, and with bent head and beseeching hand offer to Him the secret prayer: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, *cleanse the thoughts of my heart* by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit."

"Guard well thy thoughts, for thoughts are heard in heaven."

5. Again, besides (1) determination, (2) prayer, (3) diligence, (4) guardianship over the thoughts, *no victory over the desires of the flesh or of the mind is possible*—especially for any who have fallen—*without unceasing battle*:—

> "For not on flowery beds, nor under shade
> Of canopy reposing, heaven is won."

We must clothe ourselves in the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. You

must always be prepared for fierce fight against Apollyon in the valley of the shadow of death. The soft compromise, wherein we allow good and evil to lie together, in amicable neutrality, side by side, is nothing but secret treachery—a mean, senseless attempt to unite the service of God and Satan. We must with all our might *resist* the Devil or he will not flee from us: nay, he will then be with us continually till he makes us utterly his own.

6. There is yet one more essential condition of victory. It is that there *should be no delay*, no tampering with sin, no procrastinating the battle; no bidding God to wait our leisure, till we are tired of sin. If we attempt this, how can we tell how soon, or how terribly, may crash on us the awful doom, "Thou fool, this night they require thy soul of thee"? To dally with sin, is to ensure defeats yet more disastrous. To parley with an enemy so insidious, is to betray the fort. What says St. Paul? "Mortify"—*νεκρώσατε*—slay, that is, at one blow, and once for all, "your members that are upon the earth—fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, for which things' sake cometh—is ever coming—the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." And again, "Be not presenting (*μή παριστάνετε*) your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present at once (*παραστήσατε*) yourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

And what says he in my text? "Fight"—literally

'be ever fighting'—"the good fight of faith; and lay hold at once (ἐπιλαβοῦ) of the eternal life unto which thou wast called."

7. My friends, *are you in earnest in the desire to conquer the sin which doth so easily beset you*, whatsoever it be? If you are not, oh, I tremble to think of what may yet await you; for nothing but God's terrible and fiery finger can then shrivel the falsehood or burn the vice out of your soul!

But if even one soul here be in earnest, if even one among you desires with all his might to save his life from destruction, and to fulfil the high purpose for which God created him, then I pray you, as if God Himself were speaking to you by my voice—and He *is* speaking by my voice to every conscience—hear me recapitulate these counsels, and try to fix them in your memories.

First, Be absolutely convinced that you *can* be saved, that the door of heaven is not yet closed against you.

Secondly, Resolve, determine in God's name, that you will *not* continue the slave of sin, and for that purpose surrender your whole soul to your Saviour.

Thirdly, Pray with all your hearts this night, and without ceasing, and as you never prayed before, to Him whose merciful ears are ever open to the cry, "God be merciful to me, the sinner."

Fourthly, Occupy all your days and hours with good deeds, wholesome interests, pure aspirations, and noble efforts.

Fifthly, Set a resolute watch over your *heart*, that you offend not by guilty thoughts.

Sixth, Nerve yourself to the battle, which must continue even to the end.

Lastly, Do not lose one single day, one single hour, one single moment; but here, now, give your whole soul to God with the cry, "I am Thine, O save me!"

So shall you be saved from your enemies!

So shall God make you and keep you holy, harmless, undefiled; so, accepted in the Beloved, purified in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, you shall fulfil the end of your existence, and in a peace which passeth understanding — ennobled, glorified, cleansed from the leprosy of sin, delivered from its snare, freed from its fetters — you will attain to that mystery "Where God in man is one with man in God,"—and at last, victorious amid "the sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies," you shall hear those words, which shall thrill with unimaginable rapture your weary souls,

"Servant of God, well done!"

XII

CONTINUING CHRIST'S WORK

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"And I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."—Col. i. 24.

The verse may be more clearly and accurately rendered, "I supplement, in Christ's stead, in my flesh, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of the Church, which is His body." Now it is easy to understand that St. Paul regarded the sufferings of his life as borne for Christ's sake, to serve His Church; but what does he mean by the startling expression, "the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ"? Are Christ's afflictions then insufficient? Do they require to be supplemented by men's exertions?

2. The answer is at once, 'Yes' and 'No.' Christ's *atoning* sufferings need no supplement—they were, thank God, "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"; and when, on the cross, He uttered His last great cry in the one word *Τετέλεσται*, "It is finished!" He left nothing incomplete in His redemptive sacrifice. "Finished was His holy life; with His life, His struggle; with

His struggle, His work; with His work, the redemption; with His redemption, the foundation of the new world." In those mediatorial sufferings none can share. *His* Cross, the cross of His atonement, we cannot bear: "it cost more to redeem our souls; so that we must let that alone for ever"; but *the* Cross—the cross of sorrow and perpetual struggle against the forces of sin and death, both in our own hearts and in the world,—that Cross, the cross of His personal affliction, He has bidden us to take up, and follow Him. In that sense it is still our glorious privilege 'to supplement His afflictions.' So long as one of His foes remains unconquered, so long as there is sin and sorrow in His universe, so long as there are prodigals still in the far land, sheep still lost, souls still unredeemed, so long is Christ's work uncompleted, and so long He leaves to us the glory and the blessing of drinking the cup which He drank of, and being baptized with the baptism which He was baptized with. And thus, by obeying Christ, and taking up His Cross, we are permitted to share in a work which archangels might envy us. We are often weary and sore troubled. There are times when even from the hearts of good men—if they do not lift up their eyes from life's dull levels to the sunlit hills—would be wrung the cry—

> "There's nothing in the world can make me joy;
> Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale,
> Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man."

There are times when, in utter despair of things around us, we can find no comfort but in crying to God—

> "Be near me when the sensuous frame
> Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
> And Time—a Maniac scattering dust;
> And Life—a Fury slinging flame.
>
> Be near me when my faith is dry,
> And men, the flies of latter spring,
> That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
> And weave their petty cells and die."

At such times the one comfort to a genuine saint of Christ is to know that he is supplementing the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His chosen people. Our afflictions are no longer isolated, but shared with the communion of saints; no longer merely personal, but blessed to the amelioration of the world; no longer aimless, but mingled with the Divine effect of the life of the Saviour of our race! Thus we become "fellow-labourers with Christ." "The Church is built up by repeated acts of self-denial in successive individuals and successive generations." They continue the work which Christ began.

3. Surely, my friends, in this sublime thought there is a force of nobleness and a spring of consolation. It ought to change the whole aspect of human life, and to uplift it out of the misery of its shivering egotisms, petty vulgarities, and scheming ambitions. The thought that all true work—be it sad or joyous,

be it great or little—is a continuation of Christ's work for His suffering world, should perpetually console, ennoble, and inspire us. Thus, and thus only, can we rescue our life from being

> "A life of nothings, nothing worth,
> From that first nothing, ere our birth,
> To that last nothing under earth."

Thus, and thus only, can we join the great multitude who in white robes, and with palms in their hands, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Mankind gains nothing from its idlers, and trimmers, and loungers, and mammon-worshippers; it gains nothing but a curse and degradation from its swarms of incarnate hatreds and meannesses, of gluttons and drunkards, of traitors and unclean persons. It acquires any fragments of true grandeur, any gleams of not wholly extinguished light which it may still retain, from the "central figures in the glorious tragedies of our humanity, from the conquerors of desolating monsters, from the creators of law, from the tamers of license, from the healers of the sick, the rescuers of the young, the breakers of the fetters of the slave, from love mightier than death, from the avengers of wrong, from the martyrs of right, from the missionaries of mercy":—but, most divinely, most inspiringly of all, from that cross of Christ on Golgotha, in the blessedness of which we then most fully share when we take up *our* cross, and—continuing His work of mercy in the world—supplement

His afflictions by following humbly, yet with undaunted courage,—and joyously, though with bleeding feet and aching brow,—in His most holy steps.

4. Was it not this thought, the thought of participating in the sufferings and so continuing the work of Christ, which has proved strong enough to inspire even the youngest and the weakest with a death-defying faithfulness? In the seventeenth century, within the flood-mark on the shores of Galloway, we see a fair young girl of eighteen chained to a post in the path of the advancing tide, and a little nearer to the sea is chained a widowed woman. The creeping tide came up along the sand, and the waves rise and rise, and the poor woman sobs out her soul amid the choking brine and sinks in death; and the girl sees her die, and inch by inch, foot by foot, the waves rise and rise to the young girl's waist, to her shoulders, to her lips, and just as she is drowning they pull her out of the seething waters to press upon her the offer of life if she will deny her faith. But Margaret Wilson will not renounce the covenant, and, rather than be false to her convictions, she prefers to be plunged once more into those wild waves and to die. Is not life dear to her, then, in its opening flower? Yes; but principle is dearer, and truth is dearer, and in what she deems the cause of Christ she holds not her life dear unto herself. For she knows well that

> "'Tis not the whole of life to live,
> Nor all of death to die."

It is the same in all the ages. Look back from the seventeenth century to the third. Again it is a fair young mother, cheerfully facing, for Christ's sake, the horrors of the ancient amphitheatre. "'Have pity on thy babe,' they cried; 'have pity on the white hairs of thy father and the infancy of thy child.' I answered, 'I will not.' 'Art thou then a Christian?' And I said, 'Yea, I am a Christian.' Then we were condemned to the wild beasts, and with hearts full of joy we returned to our prison." So died St. Perpetua, as Margaret Wilson died fourteen centuries after her, "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Ah! a joy exceeding the joy of harvest; a joy (it has been said) which, like the exquisite odour of night flowers, was born of darkness and tribulation. And while millions are ready to betray the cause of righteousness to the fear of man, and to give up principle rather than bear the sneers of liars or the laughter of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, these brave souls, and myriads like them, died not fruitlessly, but helped to save an evil world, because they endured hardness for Christ's sake, and were supplementing His afflictions for His body's sake, which is the Church.

5. And they have left their deep eternal lesson to all the ignoble, and the idle, and the self-indulgent, and the worldly; for there is a martyrdom in life as well as the martyrdom of death, and it is the more difficult of the two The martyrdom of death—do

not our humblest soldiers and sailors face it cheerfully in the cause of England and of duty? Take them from the city slums, or the loneliest villages, or from their native hills, and which of them—low-born, reckless, rude, and untaught as they may be—which of them will hesitate for a moment to rush forward with a cheer against the batteries which vomit their cross-fire upon them, and so die by thousands, "those unnamed heroes"? Will they not stop at any moment though grim death is behind them, and the bullets are whistling about their heads,—stop, as a simple matter of course, to bind the wounds, or secure the safety, of some poor comrade? When St. Paul says that "neither death nor life shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus," he speaks as if life were something even more formidable than death. And so it is. By our daily lives, even more than by death once for all, must we fill up the work of Christ. There have been ages in which error and corruption have been all but universal, and in such days how terrible is the cost at which brave men have maintained unflinchingly the truth of God! Think of the anguish and murder of Savonarola, when, in guilty Florence, he boldly denounced luxury and vice! Think what it cost the poor monk, Martin Luther, to shake to its bases the corrupt and hollow sham which in his days had usurped the place of religion! Think how, in the cause of His Master, George Whitfield stood up in a

corrupt world and in a greedy, somnolent, and haughty church,

> "The very butt of slander, and the blot
> For every dart that malice ever shot;"

while

> "The tongue that mentioned him, at once dismissed
> All mercy from its lips, and sneered and hissed."

It is easy to be conventional, and reticent, and false; easy to speak smooth things, and prophesy deceits:—but boldly to denounce falsity, and to rebuke vice, is to

> "Stand pilloried on Infamy's high stage,
> And bear the pelting scorn of half the age."

A brave life, a noble life, a self-denying life is often one long martyrdom; but it is thrice blessed, because it carries on the work of Christ. Why should a humble, private citizen like John Howard give up ease and wealth to alleviate the misery of prisoners? Because for them, no less for himself, Christ had died, and the tear of gratitude which fell upon his hand was to him worth an empire's ransom. Why should the Scotch lad, David Livingstone, have troubled himself about the slave-trade, and the squalid and murderous savages who sell their own kith and kin? Why should Lord Shaftesbury have devoted his life to little factory children and climbing boys, to the undoing of the heavy burden and letting the oppressed go free? What made Father

Matthew toil so hard in the cause of temperance? and what sent Father Damien to die a leper among the lepers, at hapless Molokai? It was because they too, as Christ's children, longed to live, not the base, trivial life of worldly commonplace, but the life of which the Cross is the symbol, and "to uplift strong arms to bring heaven a little nearer to our earth." Verily I say unto you, immeasurably more than the selfish and the worldly, they had their reward; not only because it is deaths like these which "clothe nations in spontaneous mourning" and cause men "to go down to the grave amid the benedictions of the poor," but also, and much more because, both here and hereafter, such lives enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding. They did not care for selfish enjoyment. They knew that man has what he desires, and what is really best for him, exactly as he honestly seeks for it. "Happiness may fly away, pleasure pall or cease to be attainable; wealth decay, friends fail or prove unkind, and fame turn to hatred"; but the "power to serve God never fails, and the love of Him is never rejected." Let us strive, at whatever distance, to walk in their footsteps, as they strove, at whatever distance, to follow the steps of their master, Christ. Let me then leave with you, for your own meditations, this glorious principle, that it may be the high privilege of every one of us to "supplement that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ," for the sake of the world for which He came to live and die.

6. But perhaps you will say, How can we be like those men of whom you have told us, who went about amid the world's hatred—destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? How can we ever bring about far-reaching social ameliorations? how can we redress human wrongs, put an end to immoral customs, refute popular religious falsities, awaken consciences universally dormant and universally deceived, as did the purifier of prisons, or the emancipators of the slave, or those who woke a greedy age to noble deeds? We, you may say, are but mere nobodies,

> "of men the common rout,
> That, wandering loose about
> Grow up and perish as the summer fly,
> Heads without name, no more remembered."

We live in the narrow round of our little lives, obscure, unheard of, without fame, or rank, or wealth. Few know or care anything about us; and when we die very few eyes, and that but for a very short time, will be wet with tears. My friends, let us not thus disparage the life which God has given us. The poorest, the most obscure, the least gifted of us possesses, and may exercise, a sacred and most blessed influence on those around us, which may extend, like the ever-widening circles on the broken surface of some still lake, to the utmost marge of eternity. Every one of us will, and must, leave the world a little better and happier —or, alas! a little viler and more wretched—than

we found it. What more insignificant than a single snowflake, the white feathery crystal which a breath dissolves? Yet the accumulated snowflakes clothe the Alpine mountains with their impenetrable barrier; and, when they rush down in avalanche, they can overwhelm the cities of the valley and the plain:—even so can bad and false men, however insignificant, add to the chill barrenness and destructive forces of the world. And so, contrariwise, the healing of the world is in its nameless saints; a single star seems insignificant, but countless stars "break up the night, and make it beautiful." There is no great or small with God. He will not ask us whether the work we did was wide-reaching or almost unobservable; He will ask only whether it was faithful. If it be faithful, however small, it acquires a royal dignity. The great Archangel Gabriel thought it quite as great a distinction and privilege to help back the little struggling ant to its nest, as to save the splendid monarch from a temptation—to him the one act was as grand as the other, because God had bidden him to do both. There is an elderly man now living, never heard of half a mile from home, who yet, when he was a little boy of nine, caused a change in the life of an entire great English school, simply by the patient courage with which he *would* kneel down and say his prayers by the altar of his own bedside at night, when—awed by the base fear of man—no other boy in the school dared to break the bad

custom of neglect. The little unknown, unremarkable, new boy was pelted, and kicked, and persecuted by all the other boys for daring to do the right thing which they did not dare to do; but, very soon, others followed the example of his brave and patient heroism, until, before he left, all the six hundred boys of that great school did that which, when he came among them, none did. I say that for such an one, though he were never so obscure, "all the trumpets will sound on the other side." And so for the humblest of us,

> "When our souls shall leave this dwelling,
> The memory of one fair and virtuous action
> Is more than all the 'scutcheons on our tomb,
> Or silken banners over us."

And besides, we never in the least know when the mighty call of God may come to the most insignificant of us, to bestow on us, if we obey it, something more immortal than earthly immortality. The cruel and abominable gladiatorial games of the ancient world had lasted for long centuries, so that, without a qualm of conscience, men and women and children, and vestal virgins, and emperor, and peasants looked on and saw their fellow men or women torn to pieces by the claws of tigers, or hacked by the swords of fencers, without a quiver or a sigh. And even Christian consciences were benumbed by this bad custom, so that in a Christian city a Christian emperor, Honorius, could preside at such games. Who should end this

stereotyped abomination? Priests did not do it, nor popes, nor rulers; but it disturbed the conscience of one poor, nameless, unheard-of Eastern monk, and he travelled all the way to Rome, and went to the games, and leapt down into the amphitheatre, and thrust the gladiators apart, and denounced the sin. He was roared at, and pelted, and stabbed, and hewn to pieces, and his mangled body lay on the bloodstained sands of the arena; and his heroic self-sacrifice is only recorded in five lines by one single historian of the day. Yes, but though he thus perished, and though that was but the one remembered deed of an unknown life, by virtue of it he changed the morals of centuries, and saved the lives of thousands, and awoke the consciences of millions; and his name liveth for evermore, and he

> "There sepulchred in such pomp doth lie,
> That kings for such a tomb might wish to die."

Even so may the unexpected call come to one of us. Ah! but shall we hear it when it comes? Shall we be ready to give up all for Christ's sake? or shall we but continue our life of conventional greed and full-fed selfishness, and make the great refusal? Oh, my friends, apply this test to your lives, every one of you. Are you trying to fill up in your flesh what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church? Are you denying yourself a single thing—were it even

a few extra pennies, or a few extra shillings to the miserably small offertories of this Cathedral, to take but one infinitesimal illustration—in order to rise, by self-denial, so much as the millionth part of an inch above yourselves, and your own self-indulgent littleness? Ah! believe me, a life of frivolity, of selfishness, of gluttony, of drunkenness, of dishonesty, of malice, of indulged passions is not life, but death; not life, but corruption; not life, but ghastly failure! Let not the river of what life may yet remain to you be lost amid this foggy miasma, in these barren and choking sands. Rather "awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to move you to shame." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee!"

XIII

CHRIST WAILING OVER JERUSALEM

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"And when He drew nigh, He saw the city and wailed over it, saying, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'"—LUKE xix. 41.

TO-DAY is Palm Sunday, and the verse which I have read to you narrates its central incident. The humble triumph of the Entry into Jerusalem recalled that bright period of Christ's early ministry which has been called "the Galilæan spring." In those days He had moved daily amid the exuberant enthusiasm of the multitudes, whom He enriched with the fresh glory of that teaching which was as a dayspring from on high. But those days were long past. The hostility of Priests and Pharisees, "with fierce lies maddening the blind multitude," had driven Him into flight and exile. They, from the first, in the ignorance of their fancied wisdom, in the falsity of their self-blinding formalism, had utterly rejected Him. The last sphere of His work had been in Jerusalem; and from Jerusalem the Priests had driven Him—excommunicated, and with a price upon His head.

He had gone into deep and much-imperilled retirement to a little obscure village called Ephraim, some twenty miles from Jerusalem, on the edge of the wilderness. Nor could He venture to leave His hiding-place till, from the conical hill of Ephraim, he saw the crowds of Galilean pilgrims streaming down the Jordan Valley to the Great Feast. Among them He would be safe. He started on the journey which He well knew would end in death. Of the incidents on the way, and at Jericho, and at Bethany, I cannot now speak. At early morning He started from the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and passing under the palm groves of Bethany reached the fig-gardens of Bethphage, and sent two of His disciples for the ass's colt. They mounted Him on it, and covered it with their garments. Among the lowly pilgrims from Galilee it was a moment of intense expectation. They burst into rapturous hosannas; they tapestried the mountain-path with their upper robes; they kept tearing down the green boughs of fig and olive and walnut, to strew them before His feet. So the humble, joyous procession streamed up the Mount of Olives, through green fields and shady trees, to a platform of smooth rock, where the road sweeps round the shoulder of the hill to the northward. At that spot the city of Jerusalem bursts suddenly upon the view through the transparent atmosphere, rising out of the deep umbrageous valleys which surrounded it. The glorious guilty

city—the city of ten thousand memories—stood before Him in the morning sunlight, with its "imperial mantle of proud towers." There were the ancient impregnable walls; there the Asmonæan Palace, and the palace of the High-Priest; and the new palace built by Herod the Great, with its voluptuous splendour, with its colossal wings of white marble, its sculptured porticoes, its many-coloured marbles, its fountains and reservoirs and green promenades haunted by flights of doves. There, above all, on its vast platform, with its pinnacles and gilded roofs, a mass of gold and snow, and with its alternate red and white marbles, recalling the crest and hollow of the sea-waves, reflecting the morning light in such fiery splendour as to force the spectator to avert his glance, there rose the Temple—that most ancient and venerable shrine in all the world—the emblem of God's Presence among mankind, where, of old, the Shechinah had gleamed between the outspread wings of the golden cherubim. Confident in its immemorial sanctity the people had been wont to exclaim of old with passionate confidence, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these!" Surely at a spectacle so glorious the heart of the Messiah-King would burn within Him as He rode on in majesty among the hallelujahs and hosannas of impassioned hopes! On those roofs King David had strung his golden harp. Hither the Queen of the South had come to see the glory

of Solomon. From before those walls, in the days of good Hezekiah, the host of Sennacherib had melted away, when—

> "The Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
> And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd heavy and chill,
> And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever stood still."

There the young had shouted, and the old men wept, when the new Temple of the returned exiles began to rise from its desolation. There it had been splendidly re-dedicated by the hero Maccabee. What a rush of glorious emotions the place aroused as Jesus paused at the sight, and the palm-waving, carolling, pilgrims paused, expectant, around Him! But instead of the exultant strain, instead of the promise of glorious emancipation which they expected, a rush of pity and anguish shook the Saviour's soul—He wailed aloud. It is the only instance in His life where this is recorded of Him. We are told that He sighed—ἐστέναξεν—when He opened the blind man's eyes; and that He shed silent tears—ἐδάκρυσεν—by the grave of Lazarus; but we are told that, at this moment only in all His life—ἔκλαυσεν—'He wailed aloud!'

2. Why did He wail at this glorious spectacle? Was not Jerusalem the most religious city in the world? wholly devoted to religion? destined to the furtherance of religion? Could not its Temple service number its 40,000 Priests, and its endless

army of white-robed Levites? Were not its services announced morning and evening with the blast of silver trumpets? Did He not see the golden vine which twined over its entrance door, laden with its priceless clusters of pure and massive gold? Was not its great altar blazing and smoking at that moment with its morning sacrifice? Did not its High-Priest, in his golden vestments and his breast-plate, 'ardent with gems oracular,' go gleaming into its Holiest Place once every year with the blood of Atonement and the golden censer in his hand? Were not some 2,000,000 pilgrims from every region of the world, with Gentile proselytes among them, streaming, on that very day, to its Paschal festival?

Ah, yes! there was gorgeous ritual enough, and more than enough, but no righteousness; religiosity enough, but no religion pure and undefiled. The nations had never truly responded to the appeal of all her Prophets, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. Incense is an abomination unto Me. Your new moons and Sabbaths, I am weary to bear them. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Careful about the ablutions of cups and platters, within they were full of extortion and wickedness. Their religious scrupulosity was a glistering sepulchre, a hollow sham; and while they were priding themselves on their own righteousness and despising others, they were on the very verge of

the most awful sin the world has ever witnessed, the crucifixion of the Lord of life! Therefore the doom of ruin was passed on them by the lips of love. Within the lifetime of some who heard it, it was fulfilled in throes of agony more terrible than any known to history. Their city was besieged. They were slaughtered till the streets ran with blood. They were crucified by thousands till wood failed for crosses. Their city became an unrecognisable heap of mounded graves. Their history was ended. Their name obliterated. Their nation exiled. Their house desolate.

"Vengeance, thy fiery wing their race pursued,
Thy thirsty poniard blushed with infant blood;
She saw her sons by dubious slaughter fall,
And war without, and death within the wall.
Wide-wasting Plague, gaunt Famine, mad Despair,
And dire Debate and clamorous Strife was there;
Love, strong as Death, retain'd his might no more,
And the pale parent drank her children's gore!
But heavier far the fettered captive's doom
To glut with sighs the iron ear of Rome,
To flesh the lion's ravenous jaws, or feel
The sportive fury of the fencer's steel,
Or pant, deep-plunged beneath the sultry mine,
For the light airs of balmy Palestine."

So terribly was the doom fulfilled!

3. My friends, this awful and pathetic incident of Palm Sunday is no mere historic picture; it is also an allegory. It has for us a most solemn warning. The soul of each one among us is such a Jerusalem.

The glory of God's image is upon us, and the sign of redemption visibly marked upon our foreheads. And on each heart is inscribed a history and a prophecy—a history of shame or of faithfulness; a prophecy of triumph or of doom. Just as Jerusalem might have welcomed her Messiah-King, and have been, for all ages, "the joy of the whole earth," so for each soul here there might be an unimaginable beautitude. But also for each one of us there may be a failure as ghastly, a doom as overwhelming as that which befell the once Holy City. Have we not warning enough? How many thousands of men and women do we see sitting in the hopeless ruins of their life? That sodden drunkard—a curse to himself and to his family—who has sacrificed the glory of his manhood and the hopes of his immortality to a degrading and selfish appetite:—that man whose bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the grave:—that man whose heart is livid with petty spitefulness, black with envy, hatred, and lies:—yea, and even that man who, "with ghastly smooth life dead at heart," poses as a religious person, and wears the broad phylacteries of the Pharisee, while he is more essentially ignoble even than the worldling—have *they* known the hour of their visitation? Is the doom of the guilty city more terrific than that of guilty men? of those who for their iniquities pass into the cell of the lunatic, or lie down in the grave of the suicide? of those who after some ghastly transgression step on

the scaffold to forfeit their shamed lives? of those who clutch to the last the mask of the hypocrite, and die and make no sign? Ah! to all these Christ is now saying, or has said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes." "*But now.*"—Ah, yes!

> "There is an hour, and Justice marks the date,
> For long-enduring clemency to wait;
> That hour elapsed, the incurable revolt
> Is punish'd, and down comes the thunderbolt!"

Then Iniquity has played her part and Vengeance leaps upon the stage. "Though this day be like yesterday," says an old divine, "and to-morrow like to-day, yet one day will come for all, and then woe, woe, woe, and nothing but darkness; and though God came not to Adam till the evening, yet He came; although the fire fell not upon Sodom until evening, yet it fell; and so comes the Judge, though He be not yet come; though He hath leaden feet, He hath iron hands." But when the terrible "too late" has been pronounced, then "all the furies of hell leap upon the self-ruined soul. Thought calleth to Fear, Fear whistleth to Horror, Horror beckoneth to Despair. One saith that she cometh from this sin and another from that. Irons are laid upon his body like a prisoner, all his lights are put out at once." It may sound too terrible, yet to the hardened, depraved, defiant sinner our God *is* a consuming fire; and the adamantine laws to which a bad man

subjects himself when he has turned his back upon God, are "stern as fate, inexorable as tyranny, merciless as death, with no ear to hear, no heart for pity, no arm to save." The city of Jerusalem found it so to be, and so shall all men who, day after day, and year by year, persist in rejecting and defying that mercy of God which calleth us to repentance.

4. Our position, therefore, if we be wicked and impenitent, is exactly that of the city over which Jesus wailed on that first Palm Sunday. All the glory, all the privileges which it had abused were God's gift. Without Him we too are nothing, and less than nothing.

> "We are children of splendour and flame,
> Of shuddering, also, and tears;
> Magnificent out of the dust we came,
> And abject from the spheres."

God leaves to our free will the control of our destinies:

> "Our actions travel with us from afar,
> And what we have been, makes us what we are."

God is ever saying to us, day by day, "Behold, I set before thee this day life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life." He hath set fire and water before thee: thou mayest stretch forth thy hand unto whichever thou wilt. And oh! the difference! "The little more, and how much it is; the little less, and how far away!" The destinies of our life, unless we be serious and faithful in listening

to the voice of Christ, are often decided by things which seem very small. An apparently infinitesimal divergence may become step by step an infinite separation.

> "Alas, how easily things go wrong!
> A word too much, and a look too long,
> And there cometh a mist, a weeping rain,
> And life is never the same again!"

Palm Sunday, then, and the wail of Christ over Jerusalem as it gleamed before Him in the self-satisfied wickedness of sham religion, has for us an awful lesson, a solemn reminder. It is not too late for us yet to listen to the voice of Christ; the day for us is not yet wholly over on which we may still know the things which belong unto our peace: not yet —but the sun is speedily setting, and none knows how soon for us the night may fall. Those are very tremendous words, however much we may try to soften them down, which say, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore

shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Yet, are those words more terrible than the word of the Lord of love?—"But now they are hid from thine eyes, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Alas! "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, too often the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Yes, "it is not that God changeth His mercy, but *we* change our capacity for mercy; and it were just as absurd for a man who sees a river before him to hope it may be dry land, and so plunge into it and be drowned, as it is for a man who sees wrath written in revelation against his way of life to hope it may not be wrath, but forgiveness." We are all far too apt to neglect the warnings of Scripture; and, while we defy its exhortations, to clutch at its promises. But oh! when we think of the fate of God's once glorious Temple, and of God's once chosen people, let us not be high-minded, but fear! Let us wrestle, and watch, and pray! Then indeed, but only then, may we in deepest humility, with bent head and beseeching hand, expect the fulfilment of those gracious words, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil"; and of those gracious words, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"; and of those most gracious, most tender words ever spoken even by the lips of love, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary

and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"; and "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord."

XIV

CHRIST OUR KING

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"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."—JOHN xviii. 37.

THEY were standing face to face in the splendid hall of a palace in Jerusalem. It was adorned with vessels of gold and silver: the floor was of rich mosaic, the columns were of many-coloured marble. The speaker was a Roman Governor, seated on his tribunal in all his pomp. On either side were the Roman soldiers, in full armour, with spear and shield. Behind his gilded chair stood the lictors with their fasces. Politically, he represented the mightiest power on all the earth—the power of Imperial Rome. Personally, he wielded an almost irresponsible despotism. Before him, worn and wasted, His visage marred more than any man—the agony of long hours of struggle, and torment, and sleeplessness, in His eyes—the marks of blows and insult on His face—stood a Jewish prisoner. His hands were bound behind His back; His garb was the humble dress of a Galilean peasant. The burning sunlight of an early Syrian spring streamed through the

lattices, and the deep silence which hangs over an Eastern city at early dawn would ordinarily have been broken only by the plashing of fountains in the green spaces of the garden, or by the cooing of innumerable doves which sunned their white bosoms over the marble colonnades. It was broken now by far other sounds. The voices of the two speakers were almost drowned by the savage yells of a Jewish mob—all raging against that toil-worn prisoner; all demanding that the Roman Governor should shed His blood.

2. "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" The question was asked in an accent of utter astonishment. For indeed this Man, so poor, so meek, so gentle, so helpless, led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, stood there accused by His own people with wishing to make Himself a king. *Thou* the King of the Jews? Thou who art not in soft clothing; Thou who never in Thy life hast trodden such a palace-floor as this? Thou who hast nothing of the flash and pride of power about Thee; for whom not a hand is raised, except in menace; not a voice, except in execration? Thou a king? Where are the soldiers to fight for Thee? Where the courtiers to wait on Thee? Oh! tear-stained outcast, in this Thy hour of bitter need; oh, pale and lonely man, in Thy peasant garments, with Thy tied hands, art Thou the King of the Jews? And yet, if there was a touch of scorn, there was also deep perplexity

in the question of Pilate. The charge seemed ludicrous; and yet there *did* seem an inexplicable truth about it. There did not seem to be, after all, such an abysmal chasm between "thou" and "king." Men recognise *men* when they see them. "'Before following you,' says the hero in one of our great works of fiction, 'I must know your name and purpose.' 'I am a man,' was the reply, 'and my purpose is friendly.' 'A man!' I repeated, 'that is a very brief description.' 'It will serve for one who has no other to give. He that is without name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man; and he that has all these is no more.'" But in this prisoner there was something more than man. Before the royalty of holiness, before the supremacy of self-sacrifice in one whose life hung on his lightest word—bold as he was and blood-stained and insolent—even Pilate felt humbled and rebuked. "My kingdom," said Jesus, pitying his perplexity, "is not of this world." "*Art* Thou a king then?" burst forth in astonishment from Pilate's lips. Is there then, after all, some truth in the accusation against Thee? And Jesus calmly answered that He was indeed a king, and had come into the world "to bear witness to the truth." To the truth; that is, in Scripture language, to the reality of things, as distinguished from their semblance. "Truth!" answered Pilate impatiently, "what is truth?" What have I to do with such dim abstractions? And he was right. Of truth,

of the reality of things, Pilate knew nothing. He belonged to the world of phantasms, which he took for the sole reality; to the world which, like the shifting scene of a theatre, passeth away; to the world wherein men take the shadow for the substance, and the substance for the shadow; to the

> "bubble world,
> Whose colours in a moment break and fly.

And yet, before the unapproachable sovereignty of a divine and stainless manhood, even this fierce Roman bowed. It was this which made him exclaim again and again, "Behold your King"; this which made him angrily refuse to alter the title on the cross, which, in the three great languages of antiquity—Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin—testified to His royalty, "This is the King of the Jews."

3. The King of the Jews? Aye! and of the Gentiles; aye, and of all the world! Who would have thought that, in spite of themselves, swayed as by some indomitable conviction, the fierce and luxurious nations of the world would have been thus forced to recognise this royalty of poverty and labour, of submission and innocence, of weakness and self-denial? These are not the world's ideals; not the things which the world naturally admires; not the subjects of its envy; not the aims of its efforts. The world loves the glory of youth, the bloom of beauty; the Saul of the Hebrews; the Achilles of the Greeks.

It loves power, it loves conquest, it loves

magnificence. And yet, from the Pharaohs in their chariots, whirled into battle among the serried ranks of their archers, and with the bow bent to its full curve; from Assyrian monarchs, leading their captivity captive, and hunting the lion among their lords; from Babylonians, with the crumbs gathered beneath their tables by vassal potentates; from awful deified Cæsars in their gorgeous and dizzy isolation; from Aurungzebe, or Haroun, flaming in their jewelled robes, the world, turning away from its ideals, has dropped its weapons, has torn the garlands from its hair, has fallen low upon its knees, before the Son of Man—the Son of Man in His meekness and His humiliation—in the faded purple of His mockery, in His crown of torturing thorns!

Is not this because He bore witness to the truth, that is, to what is real amid appearances, eternal amid things that pass away? Does it not show us the inherent supremacy of righteousness over strength, of mercy over oppression, of good over evil; of the divine spirit of life over its trappings and accidents? Is not history full of illustrations? When the Emperor Henry IV. cowered before the thin old Pope at Canossa; when Barbarossa

> "took his mantle off,
> And, kneeling, on his neck received the foot
> Of the proud Pontiff;"

when our Henry II. humbled himself to be scourged,

before the shrine of Becket, by the monks at Canterbury; when King John received back his crown from Pandulph, Cardinal of Milan, was it not solely because these priests professed to represent, even when they shamelessly usurped, the royalty of Christ? When Godfrey of Bouillon refused to wear a crown of gold in the same city where Christ had worn His crown of thorns; when Rudolph of Hapsburg, founder of that great House of Austria, not finding a sceptre in the tumult of his coronation, seized a crucifix, and vowed that *that* should be his sceptre;—what were these scenes but proofs of the heart's instinctive allegiance to the King in His beauty, the Son of Man? Yes, and is not one of the notablest and most ancient crowns—the crown of Hungary—made not of gold but of iron, and that iron declared by legend to be hammered out of a nail of the Cross of Christ?

4. "Art thou a King then?" Yes! and to this King who emptied Himself of His glory, who, being rich, yet for our sakes became poor; to this King of the eight beatitudes, to this King of meekness and of mercy, all the nations of the world, however faithless, however turbulent, have bowed. "Tell it out among the heathen," said the Psalmist, "that the Lord is King;" and ancient copies of the Greek and Latin Bible, known to the Fathers, read "that the Lord is King from the tree." *Regnavit a ligno*—"He reigned from the tree." The throne of this King was not like that of Solomon, with its golden

lions and ivory steps; not like the jewelled throne of Byzantium, or the peacock throne of the Moguls. It was the throne of sorrow; it was the throne of awful self-sacrifice—it was the Cross. "By this conquer," gleamed around that cross in the vision of Constantine; and it was before this implement of a slave's shame and a murderer's punishment, that the eagles of ancient, the dragons of later Rome gave way. It was before this Cross, woven on the Labarum, that the Pagan armies of Maxentius were driven into the panic which Raphael has so grandly pictured in his battle of the Milvian Bridge. Yes, Christ is King; before the Cross of Him, "the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy," kings and their armies did flee and were discomfited; His bleeding hand "uplifted the centuries from their hinges"; and even yet before His bleeding feet the kings of Tharsis and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts!

5. My brethren, is it not well for us to remember these things? Ought we not to renew our oath of fealty to Christ in days when it seems as if the Dead Sea waves of unbelief were rising stealthily to deluge the barren desert of our godlessness and our indifference? No weapon that is forged against Him shall prosper. Greece despised Him, and Greece has glimmered into a dream; but the Cross remains. Rome hated Him; and Rome has crumbled into the dust, but the Cross remains. The ancient schools of

philosophy rejected Him, and their wisdom has vanished; but the Cross remains. It was the slow force of unwelcome conviction, it was the irresistible might of saintly weakness, which wrought the double miracle of Christianity and Christendom. Yes! He shall reign for ever and ever. The Emperor Julian, who has earned in history the terrible name of "the Apostate," hurled in vain against Him the angry force of the world's reaction.

"What is the Carpenter doing now?" sneered the sophist and orator Libanius, to a Christian—meaning thereby Him who was called the Carpenter of Nazareth.

"He is making a coffin," was the calm reply; and within a year, over the corpse of Julian, slain in terrible defeat, and dying perhaps with the despairing words, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered," upon his lips, Libanius was pronouncing his funeral harangue. It is ever thus. Whenever a nation lapses into crime or faithlessness, the coffin of that nation's greatness is made in heaven.

When in the fifth century the Byzantine Empire was sinking into the decrepitude of a merely nominal Christianity, St. Chrysostom saw some converted Goths, with their clear blue eyes and yellow hair, kneeling to worship in one of the Basilicas of Constantinople, and he prophesied that that bold and hardy race should snatch the torch of truth from the more faithless and more feeble hands. They had laid down their barbarism, they had broken

their idols at the feet of Him whom they called "the White Christ." Their own fierce chieftains they chose from the boldest soldiers, and lifted them upon their shields, amid shouts of warriors and clash of swords; but they bowed before the royalty of a crucified Redeemer. Of their race in part are we. And if we fail in our allegiance to Christ, He will never lack other soldiers and other servants; for though the heart of men be full of evil, though for a time they may say, "We will not have this man to reign over us," yet when the last appeal shall come to them, "whether they will have Christ for a king?" at last they will ever fall upon their knees in agonies of penitence, and in dust and ashes, with tears and with misereres, with beaten breasts, with uplifted hands, they will sigh back their answer—"Christ is King!"

My brethren, is He *our* King? He is our King in name; is He so in deed and in truth? Oh, it is a very solemn question! Three centuries ago, in the year 1557, the Spaniards under Philip II. were besieging the little town of St. Quentin on the frontiers of France. The ramparts were in ruins; fever and famine were decimating its defenders; its terrified population were beginning to whisper of surrender; treason was everywhere gliding among them in the shade. One day the Spaniards shot over the city walls a shower of arrows, to which were attached little strips of parchment, and on these were written promises to the inhabitants to spare

their lives and their property if they would surrender. Now the Governor of the little town was Gaspard de Coligny, afterwards the famous leader of the Huguenots, and the greatest hero of the French Reformers. As his sole answer to the Spanish proposals, he took a piece of parchment, tied it on a javelin, wrote on it the two words, *Regem habemus*, and hurled it into the camp of the enemy. "*Regem habemus*"—"We have a king!"—that was his only answer to all their threats and all their seductions. That was true loyalty; loyalty in imminent peril; loyalty ready to sacrifice all. And who was that king for whom, at the peril of his life, and of so many lives, amid fever and famine, amid sword and flame, Coligny was defending those breached and battered walls? It was no king who, by truth and gentleness, had won the love of his subjects. It was Henry II., the husband of Catherine de' Medicis, father of that Charles IX. who was afterwards guilty of the murder of Coligny, and the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew.

My friends, does not the moral follow at once? Have not we a king? Is not Christ our Lord and King—the King of verity and judgment; the King of mercy and tenderness; a King who loved us, a King who died for us; a King who sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, interceding for us now? If many are yielding to doubt respecting Him, if many are forsaking Him, His call does but come to us, His people and the sheep of His pasture,

with a deeper accent of appeal: He seems to say to us, "Will ye also go away?"

When the Empress Maria Theresa presented herself to her nobles, persecuted, helpless, a fugitive, they passionately drew their swords and exclaimed, "Moriamur pro rege nostro, Maria Theresa"—"Let us die for our *king*, Maria Theresa!" Our Lord Jesus Christ is being betrayed on every side, but He asks us not yet to die for Him. Aye! but what will we do for Him? We can sing "Crown Him Lord of all;" we can roll forth in thunders of music—

> "Crown Him with many crowns,
> The Lamb upon His throne;
> Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns
> All music but its own!"

Aye, but will we, for His sake, strive to cull those meek virtues which, like violets, grow only at the foot of His Cross? Will we be more contented, more unselfish, more high-minded? What gift will we sacrifice to His honour? What blow will we strike for His cause? What gratification will we abandon to save those for whom He died? What hatred will we brave? What passion will we crucify? What pride will we abase? What bitter word will we regret? What bosom sin will we abandon? Shall we acknowledge Him with our lips only, not in our lives? Shall we draw nigh to Him with our mouths, while our hearts are far from Him? What does He say

to us?—"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." To say "Lord, Lord," is easy; but what our King asks of us—asks of us in love, asks of us for our own sakes—is obedience. If we merely say "Lord, Lord," and do not the will of our Father in heaven, our Christianity is heathendom, our allegiance is hypocrisy. Oh let us seek Him anew, with fuller loyalty, with deeper love, renewing to Him with deep searchings of heart the oath of our homage! Oh let us this very day ask Him, in one passionate prayer, to open the heavens to us, that we too, as in the vision of His saint, may see Him standing at the right hand of God! If He be not everything to us, there is terrible reason to fear lest He become nothing to us; nothing but an idle phrase; nothing but an empty name. While there is anything which we love more than Him, we love Him not. While there is anything which we will not give up for His sake, we cannot see Him, we shall not find Him. Oh let us search our hearts faithfully as with candles, to discover the secret idol which keeps us from Him; and when we have found it let us fling it away. "Christ is the Light, let us receive the light. Christ is the Truth, let us believe the truth. Christ is the Way, let us follow the way. And because He is our only master, our only teacher, our only shepherd, and chief captain, therefore let us become His servants, His scholars, His sheep, His soldiers. Let us receive Christ, not for a time but for ever; let us believe His word, not for a time but

for ever; let us become His servants, not for a time but for ever; seeing that He hath redeemed us, not for a time but for ever, and will receive us into His heavenly kingdom, not for a time but for ever."

THE END

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